The Nation.

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...AN RENEWAL

The Revolution Of 1989: What It Means

E.P. THOMPSON
DANIEL SINGER
NOAM CHOMSKY

"We have witnessed in the past months astonishing events..." Page 117

EDITORIAL

TIME TO PAY THE DIVIDEND

Dear 101st Congress:

Welcome back. Thanks to the recent pay raise most of you should be feeling more solvent and many of you will be able to pay more attention to the public good than you have in past sessions. Since your median age is 55, perhaps you could draw inspiration from Princeton Project 55, instigated by Ralph Nader to revive civic concern among well-fixed alumni of a similar age.

Why not get this session off to a good start by making a clean break with the last, scandal-drenched Congress? The way to do that is to pass a real campaign-finance reform law—a declaration of independence from PAC money. The report that a lot of you are itching to pass Bush's reduction in the capital gains tax is not an encouraging sign.

Now about this peace dividend. Why not turn the country around by putting back into social programs the money that would have been committed to meeting the nonexistent Soviet threat? The Pentagon will raise new bogies; don't fall for the military's line that we've got to create strike forces to police the Third World or buy more ships to blockade Latin America or build more Stealth bombers to knock out jungle airstrips. You could save billions by barring covert actions and future invasions. Don't let Dick Cheney divert you from real cuts with pork-barrel weapons systems. And don't let Bush con you into reducing the Reagan deficit with the peace money. In short, why not dedicate this session to the people paying for your raise?

ETHICS AND CONGRESS
STEPHEN GILLERS

JUNE JORDAN: POET ENGAGÉ
MARILYN HACKER

JIVIN' WITH MILES
GENE SANTORO

CRUEL & USUAL
WILLIAM S. McFEELY

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LETTERS.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

London

We wish the American people to know that we roundly condemn the U.S. military invasion of Panama. We believe the United States should have used the rule of law and the offices of the United Nations instead of resorting to Theodore Roosevelt–style gunboat diplomacy and intervention in a sovereign state.

The fact that the U.S. government does not like the face or the activities of Gen. Manuel Noriega is irrelevant. Panama is a sovereign state. Moreover, it should be a source of embarrassment to the Bush Administration that Noriega was in the pay of the Central Intelligence Agency when George Bush was its director.

The United States should learn the lessons of Vietnam and Lebanon: Military intervention of this kind solves no problems; it creates them. While we regret the death of any U.S. nationals before the invasion, U.S. military activity has already caused the death of many more people, many of them civilians. In short, violence breeds violence.

There are parallels with the British and French invasion of Suez in 1956. Despite the fact that the British and French similarly claimed to be protecting their nationals and keeping the Suez Canal open for international traffic, the United States declared its vehement opposition. If the United States was right to denounce the invasion of Suez then, why is this not the case today?

The United Nations Charter, in Article 2, states, "All members shall refrain . . . from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." The United States should apply the standards it sets for the Soviet Union's relations with the countries in Eastern and Central Europe to the way it conducts its affairs with Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine should be treated as a historical aberration, for there is no place for superpower bullying in an interdependent world.

As we enter the 1990s, the people of Europe earnestly hope for a decade of peace. Let us hope the United States comes to its senses before it is too late. *Meg Beresford*
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

HEALTH CARE CATASTROPHE

Austin, Tex.

David Corn writes scornfully of "a tidal wave of complaints from better-to-do elderly Americans who didn't like the idea of paying for a program to help their poorer generational comrades" ["De-taxification," Oct. 30, 1989]. That toxic characterization of the resistance to the catastrophic health care law (the adjective is serendipitous) is stupid enough to have come from millionaire Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen.

I'm a pretty ordinary "better-to-do elderly American." How much better-to-do? Well, when I turned 70, my primary income was taken from me. Although able and willing to work, I was required to retire after fifty years in academia. I now live on annuities and Social Security. From my reduced income, I pay for Medicare. The mad American system of medicine makes supplementary insurance a necessity. It costs me and my former university thousands more each year. I continue to pay taxes, including not only income tax on Social Security benefits but also hundreds yearly to a school district where my children (long since grown up) were never pupils. Now, in the name of that catastrophic health care, my Medicare payments are increased, and my income tax is raised by a 15 percent surtax. Since I already have supplementary insurance, I am most unlikely to benefit from the new law. In particular, the new law, though it complicates already complex arrangements, does not remove the fear of bankruptcy through confinement in a nursing home.

Meanwhile, the rich keep raking in bigger and bigger bucks. "Reform" has already lowered the tax rate on their big incomes, and the incumbent President is demanding that they be given another big break on capital gains. Senator Bentsen, for his part, is not notorious for advocating an income tax on Texas corporations, which the capital of the state attempts to lure by all kinds of juicy favors. I help to pay for those favors.

Comes now David Corn and suggests that only the elderly should pay for benefits for the elderly poor. Generalized, the principle of his argument would profit me, since it would free me from the heavier burden of school taxes. But the principle that only the age group whose members may receive a benefit should pay its cost would create total chaos. According to their ability, all citizens should share responsibility for the public welfare. As a septuagenarian, I still fully accept my fair part of that responsibility, but I refuse to sit quietly when demands are made on the elderly which are made on no one else. Victimization is the idea that I don't like. *James Sledd*

UNHEALTHY ATTITUDE

New York City

The Gray Panthers of New York's East Side were astonished and saddened that *The Nation* followed the rest of the news media in unfairly characterizing Medicare recipients as affluent people who don't want to help their poorer comrades. We also think that David Corn has not looked into the actual provisions of this act nor consulted with the opposition to find what the objections to it are. The Gray Panthers opposed this plan from the time it was proposed because it costs a lot, gives very little and does not answer the real needs of the recipients.

We are in full agreement with Corn's statement about the need for a National Health Plan to cover all people and have been advocating and working for such a plan for many years. We also feel that the catastrophic health care plan (so-called) has diverted energies from this goal. *Harriet Gogel*

WAITING FOR BUSH TO GROW

Wellesley, Mass.

I was offended by the editorial, "Eichmann With a Smile" [Dec. 11, 1989]. One can tell the truth about George Bush's inadequate leadership without passing judgment on his soul! Bush, like the rest of us, is a product of our times and our distorted society. It may be too soon to assess his capacity for growth to meet new challenges. In any case, he is entitled to respect as a human being.

I am a Quaker, and subscribe to "that of God in every person," not as a dogma but as a good working hypothesis.
Elizabeth B. Lindemann

AN APPLE FOR KOHL

Schenectady, N.Y.

As a longtime teacher, I want to thank you for being the only publication for a general audience that cared enough about education to ask someone savvy about schools to review Tracy Kidder's new book, *Among Schoolchildren*. Herb Kohl's review ["Teach-by-Number Schools," Nov. 6, 1989] was worth the price of my renewal. *Susan Ohanian*

NOT FIT TO PRINT?

Rohnert Park, Calif.

Nation readers are invited to participate in a national media research project by submitting nominations for the "Ten Best Censored Stories of 1989." They can help the public learn more about what is happening in society by nominating important stories they feel didn't receive the media attention they deserved last year. The deadline for nominations for the fourteenth annual effort of Project Censored is March 1. To nominate a "censored" story of 1989, readers should send a copy of the story, including the source and date, to Dr. Carl Jensen, Project Censored, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928. *Carl Jensen*

The Nation welcomes letters – typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so please bear with us.

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EDITORIALS.

Thinking Europe

During the past months, as country after country erupted in Eastern Europe, we have received a raft of calls from media people. Half in earnest and half in we-told-you-so rhetoric, they ask more or less the same questions: What does "the left" have to say now? Why won't you admit that communism/socialism/Marxism (choose one) doesn't work, never did? Why don't you concede that Reagan, Kissinger, Kirkpatrick and all the rest of the hard-line guys and gals were right all along?

Never mind that there is no entity that can be denoted as "the left," that the loose progressive community is composed of left-liberal, democratic socialist, nonaligned post-Marxist, etc. elements that are just as diverse in their circumstances and stages of social formation as are their counterparts in Eastern Europe. Never mind that for many Marxists, socialism without democracy and human rights has always been a contradiction in terms. And never mind that, as E.P. Thompson points out on page 117, it was the aforementioned hard-liners who consistently denied that Communism was capable of reform, much less self-reform.

It is extremely important that we on the left not permit neoconservative ideologues—or establishment ideologues—to frame or pre-empt the debate to marginalize those who dissent from the conventional foolishness. To this end, in our 125th year of publication, we have commissioned a series of articles on "the revolution of 1989." The first contributor is Noam Chomsky (see page 130).

We are particularly pleased that this week's issue, coming so early in the new year and decade, makes a substantial

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contribution to understanding events in Europe, in terms of the past (see Thompson on the contributions of the peace movement to European renewal), the present (see Daniel Singer's analysis of Czechoslovakia's "velvet revolution" on page 122) and the future (see Chomsky).

Lawrence Alloway

Lawrence Alloway died of cardiac arrest on January 2 at his home in New York City. From 1968 to 1981 Lawrence wrote the art columns for *The Nation* and published four of the six books and five of the nine monographs that were to consolidate his reputation as a major critic of twentieth-century culture. Born near London in 1926, he became a lively, controversial advocate of contemporary American and British artists. In 1961 he settled in the United States. He continued to write, served for four years as a curator at the Guggenheim Museum, co-founded the journal *Art Criticism* and taught.

Lawrence suffered from neurological and spinal diseases, leaving *The Nation* when he became too weak to go to galleries, museums or his classroom. He spent his last nine years in a wheelchair, the immobility of his body in sharp contrast to the mobility of his mind. He was precise, accurate, rigorous, witty, ironic, curious, often mischievous, courageous, outspoken and proud. His conversation could switch effortlessly between anecdote and abstraction. A romantic who loathed sentimentality, he enjoyed the new in art and society. He interrogated change. The critic Robert Rosenblum praised his scholarly and focused work for "clearing up the fact sheet" on Abstract Expressionism and early Pop Art. Lawrence was one of the few male critics who took women artists and feminist criticism seriously.

Lawrence was married for thirty-five years to Sylvia Sleigh, who, during their long, close union, painted the shrewdest, most loving pictures we have of him. In 1983 he wrote some brief notes for the show "Sylvia Sleigh Paints Lawrence Alloway." Exploring the pleasures of being a "sitter," he said, "The sinuous fixity of these images saves me from being consumed by time, though not immune to its effects." Sylvia and Lawrence fought against the illness that was consuming him, their awareness of its power burnishing their gallantry. His writing is now proof of his deep, sharp intelligence, which tracked indelibly our images, icons and signs.

Standards Time

Last month, the Senate Ethics Committee authorized preliminary investigations of Senator Alfonse D'Amato and the Keating Five. D'Amato, among other things, helped large campaign contributors win lucrative grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Keating Five—Senators Alan Cranston, Dennis DeConcini, John Glenn, John McCain and Donald Riegle Jr.—collectively accepted $1.3 million in contributions from Charles Keating, head of the Lincoln Savings and Loan Association, and then helped Lincoln repel Federal regulators as it ran up losses of more than $2 billion, which taxpayers will ultimately have to cover.

The Ethics Committee has appointed special counsel. What should they look for? What *is* legislative ethics?

It is a Federal crime for a member of Congress to sell his or her office, to trade help of any kind for money. On the other hand, it is a member's duty to help constituents, some of whom will also be big contributors. Campaign donations should not buy help, but neither should they foreclose it.

D'Amato and the Keating Five contend that whatever they did, they did for the good of their constituents or the nation, not for campaign contributions. That claim is certainly one issue the Ethics Committee must investigate. But not the only one. If legislative ethics do no more than prohibit an exchange of favors for money, they would be redundant. Why have ethics codes if they merely command compliance with the penal law? The very word "ethics" suggests a higher standard.

When it comes to public officials the higher standard is clear. They should behave in such a way that the public does not have cause to wonder if the officeholder is selling the office. An official's independence from campaign donors should not be open to question. By focusing on the public's perception of wrongdoing, we add an objective standard to the subjective question of intent traditionally used by the criminal courts. What an official intended or believed—whether he or she even cared about how certain behavior might appear to others—remains important, especially in determining the appropriate sanction. Regardless of what he or she intended, however, an official can breed public cynicism through inattention or poor judgment.

From these premises, we can identify the kinds of behavior that will cause the public to question a legislator's independence and that, therefore, the Congressional ethics committees must be prepared to rebuke. Helping a contributor does not appear suspect in itself, but it can become suspect—the appearance may be altered—by the presence of some or all of the following factors:

§ The recipient of help is not a constituent of the legislator, and there is no other persuasive reason for the legislator's help except the contribution.

§ The beneficiary of the legislator's help is a large contributor.

§ The proximity of the contribution to the help. Whichever comes first, the closer they are in time, the greater the cause for suspicion.

§ The extent and nature of the help. If the legislator devotes personal attention to the matter—making phone calls and holding meetings, for example—especially if extensive, it raises more doubts than, say, a form letter from an aide.

§ The size of the group the legislator's help will benefit. We have little reason to doubt a lawmaker's independence if success will benefit a million consumers, more reason if it will profit a small group of generous supporters, and more reason still if victory for those supporters comes at the expense of the million consumers.

§ The frequency of the suspect conduct. We will be less in-

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clined to give a legislator the benefit of the doubt if we see repeated actions that suggest improper motives.

These factors are not subject to mathematical precision. None can be stated with the clarity of a penal statute. Each raises questions of judgment and degree. But the nature of the subject—ethics in public life—requires that this be so. Senators and Representatives must recognize that it is by degrees that the public forms good or bad impressions of their probity. Informed ethical judgment is what keeps the degrees in the safety zone.

The Congressional ethics committees should appreciate that a member who acts in a way that allows the public to question his or her independence harms Congress itself. The harm is aggravated—and repetition of the offending behavior encouraged—if Congress ignores the conduct. When official action erodes public trust in the institutions of government, the first and most important task of the guardians of that trust is to say so. STEPHEN GILLERS

Stephen Gillers, a professor at New York University School of Law, teaches legal and judicial ethics.

Last Hired . . .

This past August George Bush looked out over the assembled delegates at the Urban League annual conference and piously declared, "Your problems are my problems." He made this pledge despite his earlier refusal to acknowledge that the employment discrimination cases decided by the Supreme Court the previous spring constituted a setback for civil rights. Vice President Quayle also shrugged off a need for legislation that would aid workers in bringing suits to redress bias, an assurance to the right wing that it ain't broke, so we won't fix it.

It is increasingly evident, however, that the best remedy for bigotry in the workplace—Federal lawsuits—*is* broke, and people who care about civil rights should be pressing Congress to fix it.

The devastating effects of *Patterson v. McLean Credit Union*, in which the Court held that Federal law prohibiting racial discrimination in private contracts does not apply to "conduct which occurs after the formation of a contract," are easiest to see. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund has conducted a study of cases decided between June 15, 1989, when the *Patterson* decision was announced, and November 1. It found that ninety-six bias claims were dismissed in Federal courts without any substantive ruling on the claims themselves. The dismissed cases included complaints of racial harassment on the job, failure to promote on the basis of race, and discriminatory discharge. The alleged discrimination affected a wide sweep of employees—Latino, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian and Jewish, as well as black—and included some truly outrageous behavior. In one instance a black nurse was shown pictures of interracial sexual acts and told that this was what she had been hired to do.

Two other Supreme Court decisions in this area are troubling. Several claims have been thrown out at the appellate level following the Court's ruling in *Wards Cove Packing Co. v. Atonio* that plaintiffs bringing suits under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act must bear the burden of proving that an employer had no business justification for a practice that had discriminatory effects. *Martin v. Wilks*, a decision that permits suits against affirmative action plans by whites who did not originally challenge them, holds out the possibility of endless litigation over such plans.

Chaos reigns in the interpretation of *Patterson* by the lower Federal courts; judges in the same Colorado district have issued contradictory rulings on discriminatory firings, and in Chicago, a day apart, two judges took different positions on whether employees fired in retaliation for complaints about racial discrimination could sue. Beyond the dismissed cases there are the unmeasurable consequences of cases that will never be brought, of the diminishing of incentives for lawyers to represent bias victims and of reduced settlements. Even Richard Posner, a judge for the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and leader of the conservative "law and economics" movement, is troubled by what he recently called the "treacherous and shifting shoals" of employment discrimination law since *Patterson* et al.

The legislation that the civil rights community proposes—to be introduced in the Senate by Edward Kennedy and others and in the House by Augustus Hawkins—is modest to the point of timorousness. For strategic reasons it eschews broad goals of restructuring civil rights law. It does not protect gays, for instance, and very small businesses will not generally be covered. Nor does it strengthen Equal Employment Opportunity Commission remedies. Instead the bills merely seek to set employment discrimination law back on the track it followed before being derailed by the Supreme Court. The House and Senate legislation would modify Federal law to prohibit discrimination against employees by private employers and enable racial and religious minorities and women to claim damages for harassment on the job. It would restore to employers the duty of demonstrating that personnel practices detrimental to minorities are a business necessity. And it would disallow repeated challenges to fair employment consent decrees while providing workers who might be disadvantaged by them adequate notice of their provisions to allow complaints of reverse discrimination.

In his speech to the Urban League, Bush offered another bromide: "We will not tolerate discrimination, bigotry or bias of any kind, period." His own Department of Justice is suggesting that employment discrimination is hardly a thing of the past. On December 21 it sued a mostly white Cleveland suburb for imposing residency requirements for municipal employment, shutting blacks out of jobs. The new legislation, with the exception of the harassment provisions, really concerns such subtler forms of discrimination—height requirements and employment tests that are irrelevant to job performance. Strong support from Congress and a public that refuses to permit the erosion of civil rights can force Bush to give substance to his promise. DIANA R. GORDON

Diana R. Gordon teaches at the City College of New York and covers the Justice Watch beat for The Nation.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Beneath a Peak in Darien: The Conquest of Panama

America now has the Toussaint it deserves. For the Haitian liberator dragged to a French prison now find Manuel Noriega entombed in a Miami courthouse in one of a number of cells often inhabited by turncoats destined to receive a new identity in the government's witness protection program after testifying against their former associates. Noriega's destiny has been to travel in the opposite direction, from esteemed client on the U.S. government's payroll (C.I.A. division) to indictment, mug shot, prison food and, no doubt, ghastly music piped into his dungeon.

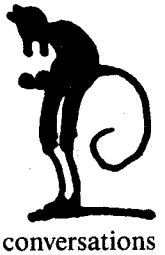
Even by the craven standards set at the time of the Grenada and Libya attacks, most U.S. coverage of the Panamanian invasion was awful, reminiscent of the German press when Hitler invaded the Low Countries, though I'm not sure even the Nazi press would have approached the matter of destruction by the invading forces with quite the brio displayed by Walter V. Robinson and Philip Bennett in their report from Panama City to *The Boston Globe*, published on December 21, the day after the invasion:

> In this city's poorest neighborhoods, artillery shells and machine-gun fire leveled the homes of the poorest inhabitants and destroyed the meager possessions of thousands, but it lifted their spirits and gave them hope.
>
> Across this devastated and emotionally and economically exhausted urban war zone, people stood amid the ruins yesterday shedding tears of happiness in spite of their predicament and cheering the Americans whose weapons turned many of their homes into smoldering ruins.
>
> "Thank you, President Boosh! Thank you, President Boosh!" exulted Alejandro Bullen as he stood shirtless not 20 yards from the still-smoking rubble of the apartment building where he once lived. . . .
>
> Lowering his voice and shaking his head, Bullen gazed at the remains of his home, adding in Spanish: "I have lost my home. I have lost everything. But finally I have my freedom. We all have our freedom."

The invasion was planned by Gen. Maxwell Thurman's predecessor, Gen. Fred Woerner. Since his retirement, Woerner has been a popular guest on television news shows. At the beginning of the Salvadoran guerrilla offensive he seemed to be on every channel I flipped to. For its coverage of the Panama invasion CBS hired Woerner as its expert commentator. Should we expect from Woerner much talk about Panamanian casualties? At a time when U.S. reporters were being fairly assiduous in trying to figure out how many died during the rising against Ceausescu in Rumania, there was a mostly laconic indifference to the matter of civilian casualties in Panama. The Pentagon now seems intent to establish its official count at around 250. The New York–based Spanish language newspaper *El Diario–La Prensa* reported an estimated death toll of 2,000. Gilma Camargo, a Panamanian law student in New York whom I have known for some years, reckons the same number after speaking to people at the Panama City hospitals Seguro Social and Santo Tomás and also to friends and relatives, some of whom live near the mass graves evident since the invasion.

The first bombing came in the early hours of December 20 and was inflicted on the poor district of El Chorillo, site of Noriega's main headquarters. Gilma's relatives told her on December 21 that hundreds of people had been killed in this bombing. At Santo Tomás a nurse named Angela told Gilma on December 24 that she had seen the hospital's morgue, which has a normal capacity of thirty-two, emptied and refilled several times that day. The nurse said she had observed burns, bullet wounds and dismemberments from explosions. In one mass grave Gilma's relatives have counted 111 bodies.

Also speaking to Gilma from Panama City was Roberto Arosemena, a professor of sociology well known in Panama for his fifteen-year nonviolent resistance to military dictatorship. His most recent book, *Testigo de Libertad*, is about his experiences in the prison on the island of Coiba, whither Noriega dispatched him in October 1987. He was arrested again last November, held for ten days and tortured. Arosemena confirmed the approximate figure of 2,000 dead and said that it does not include people buried secretly by family members, or the deaths in provinces outside Panama City. Oscar Bolioli of the National Council of Churches said that from conversations with church groups in Panama he reckoned 2,000 a conservative figure and had heard much higher estimates.



Arosemena said he had traveled around the city and saw many people who were panic-stricken, unwilling to notify authorities about family members who had disappeared for fear of being labeled Noriega supporters. (Their fears were grounded. *The Washington Post* ran a story on January 7 ratifying the U.S. position that arriving at a true casualty count is impossibly complicated since many of the dead were not actually victims of war but members of Noriega's Dignity Battalions.)

U.S. troops, Arosemena said, had conducted rigorous searches, usually destroying property and acting without regard for children and old people. Now, he said, there is an extreme display of U.S. forces throughout the city. They patrol neighborhoods in eight-to-fifteen-person units, carrying combat rifles. When Panamanians accompany them, it is always in a ratio of one Panamanian to two G.I.s, and the Panamanians never carry anything heavier than a pistol. According to Arosemena, about 1,200 people are currently detained in camps in the U.S. military compound. He spoke to one man who had been held, a civilian former government worker, who told him that detainees were bound hand and foot, eyes blindfolded and mouths bandaged. They were loaded into trucks and when they reached the installation they were thrown out, some of them suffering injuries. Then they were interrogated by U.S. military personnel. On January 1 *The Globe* ran a story by Diego Ribadeneira titled "Resentment of US spreads in Panama City" in which he describes the arrest by U.S. forces of two leaders of the telecommunications union. "They were suspected of pos-

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sessing arms but none were found. They were arrested anyway, because, according to US diplomats, they were on a list of several hundred people whom the Endara government seeks to detain. As for why the people on the list—most political activists and labor leaders—were wanted, a senior official in the US Embassy said, 'We weren't given any details, just that the Endara government wanted us to get them. They're bad guys of some sort, I guess.' "

The General's Heirs

What about the "restoration of democracy" touted in the United States as the great achievement, hooted by the rest of the world? Miguel Bernal, a professor of international and constitutional law at the University of Panama, is now teaching at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. In Bernal's view the United States is simply rebuilding Panama's army.

"The U.S. Army is putting in the same monster," he told my associate Rich McKerrow. "They put out Noriega but they left all the little Noriegas in the same place." Bernal says that all the people in the "Public Force" appointed by the United States—the new government's P.D.F.—are Noriega cronies. "There is no one who can say he didn't support Noriega. These are the people who have committed thousands of human rights violations in the last twenty-one years." Juan Guizado, the new chief of police, led the troops who attacked the presidential candidates last May. Col. Palacios Gondola, responsible for relations with U.S. troops in the Canal Zone, is also, according to Bernal, "a killer."

Bernal cited in particular the two successive heads of the new security forces, Col. Roberto Armijo and Col. Eduardo Herrera Hassan. Armijo was the U.S. Army's first choice, made immediately after the invasion. Bernal says that public protest forced his resignation on January 3. Armijo, Bernal says, led a team that tried to kill him on December 19, 1979. "They beat me publicly when we organized a demonstration on the streets against the Shah of Iran."

Herrera, once Panama's Ambassador to Israel, has had ties with the Mossad and the C.I.A. Bernal recalled Herrera's reaction to a demonstration on July 10, 1987:

> He was chief of the worst repression ever seen in the history of Panama. That day we organized a demonstration against Noriega. Herrera led the forces against that. They put more than 1,500 in jail and wounded more than 500. . . . A military for the last twenty-one years is today called democratic just because U.S. troops call it democratic. All the media worry about is Noriega. Does he eat well? Does he sleep? And no one worries about the Panamanian people and the new monster and new Noriega being built.

The General's Secrets

Noriega is indubitably in a position to discuss the darkest sides of the United States' dirty wars in Central America. It has been presumed that he could talk embarrassingly about U.S. encouragement to him to organize the assassination of Sandinista leaders. It seems he might detail the complicity of the United States in the murder (by torture and decapitation) of his liberal critic Hugo Spadafora.

But that Noriega might make sensational revelations in the court to which he has been illegally hauled does not mean the U.S. press would publicize them, however rabid the appetite for disclosure might now seem. When the Congressional committees investigating the Iran/*contra* scandal published the documentary evidence they had compiled—replete with explosive detail about the rampages of the Reagan Administration—these volumes were read by about five journalists out of a Washington press corps numbering in the thousands. Already the White House is suggesting that material put out by Noriega's lawyers is old hat.

The unlikelihood of any embarrassing disclosures finding their way into the press from Noriega's courtroom (or lawyers' offices) is already underlined by the treatment of Mike Harari. He is an Israeli officer who was one of Noriega's closest associates, having become Israel's honorary consul in Panama. His place at Noriega's elbow underscored a relationship fostered in the early Reagan years by the Americans, who, in the words of a recent article in the Israeli paper *Davar*, were happy to see Israel do their "dirty work" in the region. The National Guard of Panama (named after the U.S. National Guard) became the Panamanian Defense Forces (after the Israeli Defense Forces). Noriega visited Israel in 1986 and expressed great admiration for the I.D.F. and gratitude for Israeli aid.

In his December 22 article in *Davar*, published two days after the invasion began, Efraim Davidi reported that "the soldiers and officers of Noriega [have] in their hands weapons and ammunition 'Made in Israel'. . . . Israel has sold to Panama, in the last decade, military equipment worth $500 million, and out of this $100 million in the last three years. . . . Also, all the equipment of the Panamanian airfields is Israeli made."

Under U.S. pressure, Israel did lower its profile in Panama after Noriega fell from grace in 1987, but Harari remained. After the invasion, when all other associates of Noriega captured by the U.S. Army were closely held, Harari was immediately released and returned to Israel.

The outlook after the Panamanian invasion is bleak. With the expedition hailed as a splendid success by liberals and conservatives alike, the notion that it is entirely proper for the United States to breach all international treaties and covenants has been firmly established. Huge escalation of the U.S. presence in El Salvador, once deemed politically perilous, would now be sanctioned by the liberal mainstream and so too, probably, would an escalation of violence against Nicaragua, once it could be argued that the Sandinistas "fixed" the elections.

Bush seems to me that most dangerous of all things, a testy type who becomes unhinged at the suggestion he's a sissy, which is what the whites-of-their-eyes gang called him at the time of the failed Panamanian coup. J.F.K. was called a sissy after he met Khrushchev in Vienna and had to threaten World War III to regain his macho poise. Call Bush a wimp and his revenge, like America's, respects no borders.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ Let Old Acquaintances Be Forgot

It was only after the U.S. invasion of Panama received near-unanimous praise on Capitol Hill and in the mainstream media that U.S. politicians and pundits began to voice some questions about the operation. How long will U.S. troops have to stay in Panama? How much will all this, including the rebuilding of Panama City, cost the U.S. taxpayer? But the big question—to which the Americans and Panamanians truly deserve an answer—has not received due notice: How did it happen that twenty-three U.S. troops and at least several hundred civilians were killed in order to rid the United States of a monster of its own making?

It's probably an exercise in futility, but let me be among the very few to call for a full-fledged public investigation into the thirty-year alliance of Manuel Noriega and the U.S. government. The national security apparatus can be expected to raise the usual objection about airing state secrets. But a Congressional probe could focus narrowly on relations between past administrations and Noriega, with legitimate secrets (if any), not political embarrassments, protected.

Some critics of the Bush Administration rub their hands with glee at the prospect of Noriega in the dock revealing one secret after another. Yet, as was witnessed in the case of Oliver North, a courtroom is a poor place for discovering historical truths. A trial in this instance would probably offer merely intriguing factoids; a fuller truth could come only from a more extensive inquiry.

The chances of Congress embracing such a project, and then carrying it out honorably, are slim. Recall Congress's poor performance on the Iran/*contra* scandal. The special committees learned that Noriega had volunteered to conduct assassinations and sabotage in Nicaragua, but they sat on this information during the hearings and referred to it only obliquely in the final report, never revealing that Noriega was the one who had made the offer. So far no one in a position to do so sees fit to give the public a scrupulous accounting of how the U.S.-backed Noriega—the target of this country's most extensive military action since the Vietnam War—came to be such a threat to U.S. interests.

■ Better Dead Than Red Ink

The United States, we were told, had only one option left for dealing with Noriega: military force. But Bush and Reagan before him didn't do all they could to enforce the economic sanctions slapped on Panama in April 1988. U.S. companies operating in Panama were ordered not to pay any taxes or fees to Noriega's regime and to place the money in a special Federal escrow account. In October 1988 Representative Sam Gejdenson said that the account was shy $65 million. In January 1989 the Reagan Administration allowed companies to sidestep the escrow procedure altogether and keep their own records of the moneys owed to Panama.

Some U.S. firms, relying on Noriega's good graces, found indirect ways to funnel money to Panama. The September 1989 issue of *Corporate Finance* reported that a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Panama accused United Brands of working with the regime to circumvent the sanctions. Yet the Treasury Department office charged with enforcing sanctions, so underbudgeted that it could not send an investigator to Panama, was unable to pursue violators actively. Vigorous enforcement of the sanctions could have hurt U.S. companies. So could a U.S. refusal to process dollars from Panamanian banks connected with Noriega and used for money laundering, an action the Treasury Department opposed, fearing damage to U.S. businesses. Rather than put profits at peril, Bush chose the more acceptable course of placing lives at risk.

■ Coming Soon: The Rogue Unit Theory

Nearly two months after six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were killed by uniformed assailants, El Salvador's President, Alfredo Cristiani, announced that members of the military were responsible for the murders. Only weeks ago delegations of prominent Salvadorans visited Capitol Hill to argue that the F.M.L.N. rebels had done the deed. In a meeting with Jim McGovern, an aide to Representative Joseph Moakley, who heads a Congressional task force on the Jesuit killings, one of the delegates, businessman Roberto Murray Meza, outlined their reasoning: Back in October the F.M.L.N. bombed the office of the left-leaning union Fenastras as a provocation. Then, because Cristiani asked Father Ignacio Ellacuría to serve on a commission to investigate the bombing, the F.M.L.N. had to kill him and, presumably, the others. Similar accusations of F.M.L.N. responsibility for the bombing and the eight murders were pitched to Senator Patrick Leahy's office by another delegation, which included three government officials. Shortly before Christmas, Foreign Minister José Manuel Pacas told a group of Protestants from the United States that he too believed the military was not involved in the killings.

So much for the accuracy of Cristiani's pitchmen. Will these leading citizens of El Salvador now take refuge in the view that Cristiani is scapegoating patriots just to insure the flow of U.S. aid? Others who should be shaken by Cristiani's announcement are the right-wing fantasists at the American Foundation for Resistance International, whose directors and advisers include Jeane Kirkpatrick, Saul Bellow, Jack Kemp, Norman Podhoretz and George Will. The group's most recent newsletter vulgarly notes, "Until it can be proven without doubt that this was the work of the right wing, in which case we will admit we were wrong, we will harbor a deep suspicion that this was one more example of the perfectly executed Soviet school Marxist-Leninist 'active measure.' " Well, let's have that admission, as well as the apology owed by the Bush White House and the lawmakers who backed the funding, training and arming of the priest killers. They should all recall what Ignacio Martín-Baró, one of the slain Jesuits, said when asked what Americans could do to help El Salvador: "Keep trying to get your government to stop sending guns to the Salvadoran military. Those guns are aimed at us."

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ARTICLES.

E.N.D. AND THE BEGINNING

History Turns on A New Hinge

E.P. THOMPSON

We have witnessed in the past months astonishing events, coming pell-mell one after another, rising in a surreal crescendo in the final two months of 1989.

The first signals were ideological, with the overthrow of forty-year-old taboos, with the publication of nonauthors and the rehabilitation of nonpersons. Then, in the Soviet Union, the curbing of the K.G.B., the surge forward in *glasnost*, the assertion of some forms of law. Then the astonishing televised theater of the Soviet Parliament and the defeat and humiliation of party officials in elections, followed by waves of strikes, especially of the miners, and the outburst of nationalisms. Then the rapid loosening of controls in Eastern and Central Europe and the virtual dissolution of the Hungarian Communist Party (I never thought I would see the sacrosanct Leninist dogma, the "leading role" of the C.P., withdrawn by the party itself). Power sharing in Poland. Then the spectacle of thousands upon thousands of East Germans crossing to the West, at first through Hungary and Czechoslovakia and later through the peaceful "revolution" in the G.D.R. and the opening of the Berlin wall. Then even the cautious Bulgarians joining democracy's chorus; the exciting days that transformed Czechoslovakia.

As a fearsome counterpoint to all this, the terrible theater of Tiananmen Square, the tank assault on students. And, as a climax to the year, compressing all the lessons of Stalinism into one horrendous week of bloodshed, the partly nineteenth-century and partly TV-inspired revolution in Rumania, with the Christmas Day execution of the Ceausescus.

How, it must seem, could it be possible for any system to be more discredited than communism or any set of ideas to be exposed as more bankrupt than Marxism-Leninism? The question is enforced by the total loss of self-confidence in the ruling Communist circles in Eastern Europe and, very widely, in the Soviet Union.

No wonder Western cold warriors are sounding off their triumphal notes. It would be strange if they did not. Francis Fukuyama wrote "The End of History?" as a contribution to a symposium in *The National Interest* this past summer. He celebrates the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism," whose consequence will be "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Another contributor to the symposium, Professor Allan Bloom, is even more ecstatic:

> This glorious victory . . . is the noblest achievement of democracy, a miracle of steadfastness on the part of an alliance of popular governments . . . over a fifty year period. . . . This victory is the victory of justice, of freedom over tyranny, the rallying of all good and reasonable men and women. . . . It is the *ideas* of freedom and equality that have animated the West and have won.

I must thank Professor Bloom for voicing with such naïveté the thoughts of so many others, and for giving me a text to interrogate. This text says that "we have won" the cold war and that this is due to the ideas and steadfastness of "the West."

But hold on! It does not seem to be "the West" but the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, East German, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian and Rumanian peoples who have started to settle their own accounts. The ideas of the "free West" have never, I think, been greatly at risk in the West from Communist tyranny—indeed that tyranny has often been a foil to set off Western freedoms to greater advantage. Certainly, notions of human rights have been strongly endorsed in some Western codes and institutions, although imperfectly practiced. But the peoples on "the other side" are not being dispensed these rights by some Western charity; they are obtaining them by their own efforts.

Indeed, one might call into question the whole triumphalist script, on several grounds:

§ Far from hastening these changes, it can be argued that the NATO posture delayed them. Nothing is more obvious than that the changes were long overdue, and that we are seeing the release of pent-up pressures. Brezhnev and his clique derived their only legitimacy precisely from the Western "threat" and from the need to "defend" against a heavily armed nuclear adversary. No human rights were ever introduced by the threat of nukes.

§ One is also perplexed by the smug notion that over there they are adopting "our" values. I wish that I knew what "our" values are. (Medicare, or cutting the capital gains tax?) Some of these people, it seems, are guided by their own values.

In fact, the "free West" has had rather little influence, apart from the negative one of delay, upon these changes. In terms of challenge to Stalinism and Communist orthodoxy, one major stream has always been that of Communist self-reform, from Khrushchev, from Laszlo Rajk, Imre Nagy and Pal Maleter, from Dubcek to Gorbachev. Another has certainly been human rights dissidents, but anyone familiar with Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia or with the Hungarian opposition over the past few years will know what a wide spectrum of ideas and values is involved: There is no simple transfer to the ideas of the "free West."

§ There is a ludicrous notion that the whole of Eastern and Central Europe is now intent upon hurling itself helter-skelter into a market economy, the restoration of capitalism in a Thatcherite form. Certainly the absurdities and the absolute failures of a command economy are making many in

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Poland and Hungary look in that direction. And the Poles, who will never listen to anyone and who must always learn everything for themselves the hard way, are just now on a "free market" high. (There is also a perceptible widening of the gap between a new political class, *Solidarnosc*'s *nomenklatura*, and the proletarian founding members of the union who are falling out of the national discourse.)

But we are in times of great political plasticity, of rapid swings in trends and fashions. After Hungarians and Poles have swallowed the remedies of U.S. advisers and are suffering the consequences of steep price rises and unemployment, one can expect a more balanced reflection upon public and private priorities.

§ In any case, what is absurd is the notion that the only available alternative to "Stalinism," or Communist centralized statism, is Fukuyama's "Western liberal democracy" (with the free market). Leninism and Stalinism have been subjected to dozens of other critiques. There have been critiques that shared some Communist premises—by Rosa Luxemburg, Victor Serge, Alexandra Kollontai, and thence to Bukharin, Trotsky and so on. There has been the major social democratic critique and alternative, in all its variety. There are now the green environmentalist critique, the models of workers' control and smaller-scale autonomous and cooperative units, and many more.

So we must watch and listen before predicting the outcome. And the outcome may well be different in different nations. New forms and improvisations may be discovered, drawing upon social democratic, cooperative and private initiatives. One can also envision a bleaker outcome, in which Central Europe becomes a dumping ground and a cheap labor manufactory for West German and Japanese capitalists.

In all this we are told repeatedly that everything that is now happening is extraordinary, unprecedented, quite unpredictable. And yet the very substantial confederation of political forces gathered around the European Nuclear Disarmament movement (E.N.D.) not only predicted some of it but has been actively working toward it for a decade. From 1980 on, we put the causes of peace and freedom together. We repeatedly crossed East-West frontiers, entered into dialogue with official and unofficial voices and prized open the doors through which the events of 1989 have come. To our surprise, after 1985 our own words started to come back to us—from Moscow. It was Gorbachev who took our lines, who spoke of ridding Europe of nuclear weapons "from the Atlantic to the Urals," who proposed a practical agenda for the dissolution of both blocs, who advocated the withdrawal of Soviet and U.S. troops behind their own borders by the year 2000.

The habit-formed executives of the cold war have been feeling increasingly threatened. Not only Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger is made uneasy by the relaxation of the cold war compulsions that he said were "characterized by a remarkably stable and predictable set of relations among the great powers." One of the advantages of that system, in the eyes of its executives, was that it not only held the "enemy" in an assured place; it also held client states and potentially insurgent peoples in their places. It was always an internal police system and a means of internal ideological control as much as an external one.

The tone of Zbigniew Brzezinski on a recent visit to Moscow may not be acceptable for long. He addressed the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy and instructed the members in their duties. He required "major institutional changes in the Soviet Union," adding that socialist countries must transform themselves into pluralist democracies, and the two Germanys must be united. In a similar vein Professor Charles Gati, the leader of a U.S. academic group visiting the Soviet Union, announced that "the Finlandization of Eastern Europe is now O.K. with the Soviet Union without any concession by the West."

I remain unconvinced, and even if the Soviet Diplomatic Academy is demoralized and lacking in self-respect that is no reason for the Western peace movement to endorse its surrender. What is this but a reminiscence, in less aggressive terms, of John Foster Dulles's "rollback"? This hardline posture never rolled back anything except the lips from the fangs of Stalinists in response. It is calculated to provoke exactly such a reaction, if not today, then tomorrow.

Moods are swinging fast on the other side. Leaving aside scenarios of a backlash, and of Bonapartism imposed by a frustrated military (and all that will depend more upon internal Soviet problems than upon the actions of the West), we may soon encounter a different level of response in a revival of Soviet self-respect and national pride.

The Soviet people are not going to be humiliated forever as the losers of a mock war that they have done much more to bring to an end than has the West. They will not be pushed around forever, as if they had thrown up their arms in unconditional surrender.

The events on the "other side" have utterly destroyed the credibility of cold war military scenarios. As West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has asked, "Do we really want to acquire new nuclear rockets that can reach the Poland of Lech Walesa . . . or the Hungary of humaneness and democratization?" He said this before the Berlin wall was opened, which (to everyone except British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher) terminated any possible notion of modernizing short-range nuclear weapons in Europe.

All this has fulfilled a good half of E.N.D.'s agenda. But not the whole of it. We had always proposed a mutual and reciprocal process of disengagement and withdrawal. We are still waiting for the other shoe to drop.

What do I mean by the "other shoe"? It is not just Western economic aid. It is certainly something more than Western applause and human rights rhetoric. Let me give examples. The Brezhnev Doctrine has been explicitly renounced. But as yet there has been no sign whatsoever of the renunciation of the Truman Doctrine of 1947, by which the United States asserted not only a right to intervene in Greece and Turkey but also to intervene when *any* nation was threatened by Communist "subversion." Nor is there any repudiation of the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, which extended the U.S. sphere of direct intervention to the Middle East (further ex-

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The young generation of Palestinians has the **courage** to fight for their freedom. Do we have the **courage** to support them?

Since banned, this poem was read at a peace rally in Israel a few months ago. It was written and delivered by Dan Almagor, one of Israel's best-known playwrights and t.v. personalities.

We Shoot Children Too, Don't We

Most of these people truly desire
To harvest their olive trees
As they have for hundreds of years.
Most of these people truly desire
To raise their kids
Not to throw stones
Or Molotov cocktails;
But to study in peace
To play in peace
And raise a flag.
A flag.
Their own flag.
And facing that flag, to cry
As we did, that night, then, excited as we were.
And we have no, have no, have no
Right in the world
To rob them of this desire,
This flag, These tears.
These tears which always, always
Come after all the others.

Let us start preparing our defence.
We will need it soon enough:
Those who actually did it
And those who still do.
All those who hushed it up
And those who still do.
And those who said nothing
And those who clucked their tongue, saying
"Something must be done really;
(But not tonight. I have a concert.
A gala event.
A birthday!)
Indeed, we'll all get our summons one day
For the colonels' trials.

The colonels' trials are coming.
Their time will come, it must be so.
The trials of the generals, the colonels,
And the division, the battalion,
And the platoon commanders.
There is no escaping it.
This is how history works.
What shall we say then?
What will the colonels, the captains, the corporals say?
What will they say --
Of those terrible beatings, The brutality.
Of houses blown up.
And most of all, the humiliation, That humiliation.
Of patients forced to wipe off the writing on the walls.
Of old men forced to take down a flag
From an electric pole.
Who got electrocuted, or fell
And broke their legs.
Of the old water carrier
Whom soldiers ordered off his donkey
And rode on his back, just for fun.

We turned a deaf ear,
We turned a deaf heart,
Mean, arrogant, and dumb.
Who do we think we are?
To be so deaf, so dumb?
Ignoring the obvious: They are as human
As we are, as we are.
At least as we used to be.
Only forty one years ago.
No less diligent, no less smart
As sensitive, as full of hope.
They love their wives and children
As we do, no less.
And our children now shoot theirs
With lead, plastic bullets, and gas.
The Palestinians state will come to pass. It will.
Not a poet wrote this. History will.
And seasons will come and seasons will go
And life goes on as we very well know
Weddings and birth and death all the same.
But just the shame of it. The shame.

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tended by Jimmy Carter to the Persian Gulf).

The Truman Doctrine was nothing less than the direct passing-on of ugly British imperialist and royalist strategies to the United States during Clement Attlee's bankrupt second Labour Party administration. These doctrines license the perpetual presence in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets. I often wonder what on earth Americans suppose their fleet is doing raging up and down this European and African sea, from time to time shelling Lebanon or sending bombers over Libya. If Gorbachev can take his nuclear submarines out of Baltic waters, which lap against Soviet shores, it is surely time to withdraw some elements of the U.S. Navy from the Mediterranean. (The question may provide its own answer: The cold war with the Soviet Union is not the true reason for the deployment of the fleet but the pretext or plausible excuse for a wider exercise in imperialist control, an excuse made less plausible every day.)

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and self-criticism of its military adventure there have been matched by no such self-criticism by the United States of its sponsorship of civil war in Nicaragua. Gorbachev now speaks of his willingness to withdraw Soviet troops and bases from Central and Eastern Europe as part of a reciprocal agreement with NATO. But the United States has not responded by offering to remove bases from Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Britain, Belgium or West Germany.

One could give further examples that show that the cold war is ending, but with one-sided concessions. If the Soviet leadership is, for the time being, satisfied with this, the peace movement in the West cannot be. There is work enough for us to do.

How on earth can these prestigious persons in Washington ramble on in their sub-intellectual way about the "end of history"? As I look forward into the twenty-first century I sometimes agonize about the times in which my grandchildren and their children will live. It is not so much the rise in population as the rise in universal material expectations of the globe's huge population that will be straining its resources to the very limits. North-South antagonisms will certainly sharpen, and religious and nationalist fundamentalisms will become more intransigent. The struggle to bring consumer greed within moderate control, to find a level of low growth and satisfaction that is not at the expense of the disadvantaged and poor, to defend the environment and to prevent ecological disasters, to share more equitably the world's resources and to insure their renewal—all this is agenda enough for the continuation of "history."

It is an agenda that will not find all the answers in an unrestrained market economy. On the contrary, we are going to need the fullest repertory of forms—cooperative, individual enterprise, social democratic, the centralized planning of some resources, autonomous units—as well as new forms and ways based on families, communities and neighborhoods, and new forms of self-government and simplified styles of living.

In all this, socialism has not been discredited, although command economy communism has; socialism is part of the inheritance we shall need, although drawn upon critically and selectively. The most viable future may well be a kind of socialism, although of a green and individualistic kind, with strong antistate resistances.

It is profoundly moving to see the forms of the old cold war dissolving before one's eyes, but they are dissolving primarily on the other side. The cold war has not been a heroic episode, an occasion for triumph, but the most futile, wasteful, humanly destructive dead end in history. It has led to an inconceivable investment in weapons with inconceivable destructive powers that threaten the very survival of the human species and of other species perhaps more worthy of survival. It has nourished and reproduced reciprocal paranoias. It has enlarged authoritarian powers and the license of over-mighty security services. It has deadened imagination with a language of worst-case analysis and a definition of half the human race as an Enemy Other. Its refraction into internal ideological and political life has been malign for both sides. I need not document the offenses against human rights on the other side. On this side we have had absurd spy games, McCarthyism and redbaiting, the purging of trade unions and academies and the inhibition or closure of many intellectual areas.

I could even regard that forty-five years of waste and ideological terror with a sense of personal grievance. How much of my life, and my wife, Dorothy's, and our friends', went into restraining that coldness from becoming hot! There have been compensations in working with successive peace movements—high-spirited, voluntary, generous movements—the best people I know. But without the cold war I could have fulfilled some scholarly projects that I must now leave unfinished. We might even have found the time to take leisurely holidays on the Mediterranean. We would not have been always running for forty-five years. I am astounded that Fukuyama can find the end of the cold war to be "a very sad time."

But I am not as astounded as all that. For four decades the cold war has been some people's profession—that is, it was their job to keep it going by every possible means. There are naturally little eddies of panic now in the State Department and around Whitehall, a natural fear of redundancy. What is astounding is that all these people should now come forward and claim that they are the victors, that they brought the cold war to an end. These are the people who have systematically screwed up relations between East and West on every occasion; who have used their journals—*Commentary*, *Encounter* and *The National Interest*—to publish lampoons and direct lies about independent intellectuals; who used undisclosed agents and sources of secret-service money to infiltrate and confuse trade unions, democratic organizations, journals and publishing houses; who denied on every occasion that Communism or "totalitarianism" could ever be capable of self-reform; and whose activities contributed significantly to delaying and inhibiting that process. If these people are now finding themselves bereft of some functions and a little bored, that is a comfort to the rest of us.

If these were not the agents who influenced the end of the

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cold war, who were? Historians will argue this for decades. One major factor, of course, has been the crippling burden of the arms race upon the superpower economies and especially the Soviet economy. Another has been the overflow of the long pent-up waters of Soviet and Eastern European renewal. Another factor, however, has been the influence of the Western peace movement. This has been influential in two ways. First, its massive education of consciousness, especially on nuclear weapons, has been a shield against chaos. It has modified the language and even the strategies of politicians and militarists. It has redefined the political art of the possible.

There is a second, less visible influence, which is more difficult to demonstrate. I have argued that Cold War II, while underscored by military-industrial complexes, was held together within an ideological structure. If this was so, then the nonaligned Western peace movement played a critical part in the "ideological moment" when that controlling ideological field of force was broken.

It is of real significance that even at the height of the Euromissile crisis, the major Western peace movements maintained their autonomy and did not become captive pro-Soviet auxiliaries. At some point between 1982 and 1985 matters came to a crisis. In our contacts with officials on the other side we could feel a palpable sense of uncertainty and of reorientation. We became aware of more flexible responses from Moscow think tanks and younger researchers. The Soviet ideologists knew that millions had been demonstrating for peace in European and American cities who were not World Peace Council auxiliaries, who made demands upon the Soviet Union as well as upon NATO, who had a growing traffic with dissidents and yet could not possibly be written off as "anti-Soviet," who were ardently resisting the weapons programs of their own governments and suffering the usual lampoons for this, who showed good will not to the ruling Communist Party but to the Soviet people, who had a strategy "beyond the cold war" that, while never reported on Radio Free Europe or the Voice of America or the BBC, did trickle through to the other side.

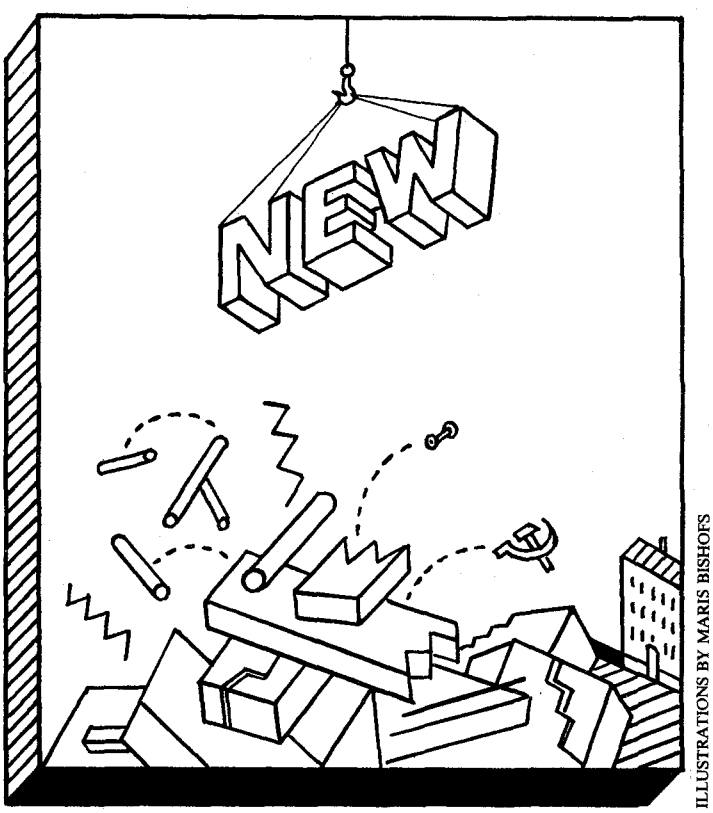
I have one point of agreement with Fukuyama, and that is in his emphasis on the power of ideas. At certain moments history turns on a hinge of new ideas. I think that there was such an ideological moment in 1982-85, in which peace movements and human rights movements together gave history a new hinge.

We also prefigured again and again the events of 1989. The little tracks we made in the East-West exchanges of the 1980s lead directly to today. Roy Medvedev, the sole Soviet resident who signed the initial E.N.D. appeal, is now an influential member of the Soviet Parliament. Many of our Hungarian friends of different tendencies, whom we visited and argued with in the early 1980s, are now very active in Hungarian political life. Jiri Dienstbier, the new Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, was a contributor to the 1987 collection of essays on the politics of peace that I co-edited, *Prospectus of a Habitable Planet*, and we had long prepared the way for common understanding by visits and published debate with members of Charter 77. Dialogue with Poles was sometimes more difficult, but Jacek Kuron, now Polish Minister of Labor, suddenly turned up at the E.N.D. convention in Lund, Sweden, in 1988, and he and I embraced on the convention platform.

One case may be taken for all. In 1981 British and West German church groups began to make contacts with the first independent peace initiative in East Germany, which was led by Robert Havemann and Pastor Rainer Eppelmann. Activists from E.N.D. paid visits, as did Dutch and West German peace workers. Some were denied visas, others were thrown out. Later, visitors from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament received the same treatment. From this initiative a small women's peace movement developed in East Berlin, of which Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe were leading members. Women from E.N.D. visited them, and one of our members, Barbara Einhorn, was held for several days in an East German prison. There were perhaps twenty or thirty of these East Berlin independents involved by 1982. Bohley and Poppe are founders and leaders, respectively, of the East German renewal groups New Forum and Democracy Now. In September Bohley reported that New Forum had 1,500 members. New Forum now claims 200,000 members.

When the time is ready ideas can flow like the rivers of China in flood. I think that we helped to throw down the banks and let those pent-up waters through. Those waters are not just those of the rejection of all forms of socialism. They are also those of renewal, of those, like Christa Wolf, who decided to stay and to remake their societies.

So when I speak of a healing process I do not mean that this process should start today or tomorrow. I mean that it has long been the hidden and unreported script. For a decade the forces of peace and freedom, of a greenish libertarian socialism, have been recognizing one another. The



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events of late 1989 are a part of that healing. It is already far advanced.

Is all this insupportably Eurocentric? Yes, in one sense it is. I have not apologized for this because one has to act where one is, and guilt is an unproductive political motivation. Europe has generated two world wars, and for four decades it has been the central field of potential military engagement during the cold war, and the possible killing ground of a nuclear exchange. Europe has exported its quarrels and its armed ideologies to the Third World, along with the arms trade. Our job as Europeans, but also as Americans, is to bring that futile episode to an end, so that the more important problems of the world can be attended to.

If indeed the cold war is coming to an end then perhaps my and Dorothy's forty-five years of political activity for peace may be allowed to come to an end also. It is a terribly long and thankless struggle to try to influence the course of history by little movements "from below," but maybe after four decades we have made a little headway. I missed some of the last episodes—the opening of the Berlin wall, the Czechoslovak self-liberation—because I was somewhat foggy with a severe viral pneumonia. During the Czechoslovak crisis I was on a respirator, and the day the great crowds occupied Wenceslas Square was also the day that my condition took a turn for the better. Prague's lungs and my lungs seemed to recover on the same day: The crowds in Prague yelled "Dubcek, Havel, *Svoboda*!" □

LETTER FROM EUROPE

Czechoslovakia's Quiet Revolution

DANIEL SINGER

Prague

"Havel to the castle": In the doubly festive mood just before Christmas the heart of Prague was full of posters bearing that slogan and a picture of Vaclav Havel, the famous playwright, his shirt open at the neck, looking impish, irreverent and very youthful for his 53 years. There were also less numerous pictures of a more dignified Havel, with suit and tie, as if somebody had subsequently decided that people want a more respectable image of a man who would occupy the presidential palace. When events move so fast it is necessary to improvise.

I had come to Czechoslovakia with one obvious question in mind. Stalin's exported revolution had collapsed throughout Eastern Europe. On its ruins it was possible to restore capitalism or to build something different. The Hungarian and Polish rulers had clearly opted for the capitalist road; where it will lead them is another matter. Do the Czechoslovaks have an alternative?

Prague, with its variety of architecture—Gothic and Renaissance, splendid Baroque and more Art Nouveau than in Vienna—remains a superb setting for any investigation, only the answers here never seem simple or predictable. Thus, as a slogan on one poster put it in a nutshell, the Czechoslovaks had just won in ten days what it took the Poles ten years, the Hungarians ten months and the East Germans ten weeks to achieve. Yet they have managed to perform their heroic symphony in a minor key and couple the word "revolution" with such unexpected adjectives as "peaceful," "moderate" and "orderly." There is a distance, an irony, a sense of humor in the cultural climate here and, once bitten twice shy, an allergy to romantic illusions.

I get a taste of this mood from the very start in the flat of Petr Uhl and Anna Sabatova, one of the rare places, particularly in this part of Europe, still conveying the spirit of the 1960s New Left: a picture of Che Guevara on the wall and a poster proclaiming "Marxism is dead" with a winking Marx replying, in French, "My eye!" Uhl, just out of jail, where he has spent nine of the last twenty years, apologizes for the little time at his disposal. On top of many new tasks, he still has his old job as a stoker in the subway. There were four men on the job and now there are only three. Still, he can't complain since the man who left, friend and former journalist Jiri Dienstbier, was transferred to the seventeenth-century Cernin Palace, not as a stoker but as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. When I told this story to Ladislav Hejdanek, the subtle philosopher and former spokesman of Charter 77 who as such had much bitter experience with odd jobs, he lectured me on the virtues of being a stoker: There are not many manual jobs in which you can find spare time for reading.

This Czechoslovak version of the "pride of understatement," which Hemingway attributed to the English, is not the only reason for the complexity of the answer to my original question. There are more objective grounds for that. The Czechoslovak economy, as we shall see, badly needs an overhaul, but its crisis has none of the urgency of Hungary's, let alone Poland's. That is why the radical political transformation has not been combined so far with a major social upheaval. Add to it two tendencies pulling in opposite directions. Between the wars Czechoslovakia was the only country of the future Soviet bloc with a genuine democracy and strong left-wing roots (the 38 percent of the poll captured by the Communist Party in a free vote in 1946 was not accidental). Against this must be set the Stalinist purges and trials as well as the Soviet tanks dashing the hopes of 1968. The balancing act is not easy. In the city of Kafka and of Jaroslav Hasek, the author of *Good Soldier Schweik*, the questions may be crude, but the answers are never simple, or only deceptively so.

The "Velvet Revolution"

O.F. are two letters to be seen all over the country. These are the Czech initials for *Obcanske* (Civic) *Forum*, an umbrella organization set up on November 19, 1989, centering on the signatories of Charter 77 and headed by Havel. Its

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s Europe correspondent.*

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ONE OF THE YEAR'S

10 BEST

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VILLAGE VOICE
— Vincent Canby, NEW YORK TIMES
— Judith Crist
— Roger Ebert, SISKEL & EBERT
— David Edelstein, NEW YORK POST
— Stewart Klein, WNYW-TV
— Jeffrey Lyons, SNEAK PREVIEWS
— J. Hoberman, VILLAGE VOICE
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Prague headquarters are at the end of Wenceslas Square, where most demonstrations are held. "Square" is a misnomer because it really is an avenue, a sort of short Champs-Élysées. Come rain or shine, a crowd is gathered outside the forum's headquarters in front of a television set. The Czechoslovaks are watching their history on video, the crucial night of November 17. It was a bloody night during which at least 143 people were wounded, according to a parliamentary commission report. Bloody, that is, by some standards, such as the Paris nights in May 1968, though mild compared with Rumania or Panama. Indeed, for me the images were very reminiscent: With their shields and truncheons the cops of all lands seem to be brothers. But in Prague, that night was the beginning of the end for the regime.

The regime had clubbed on purpose. Jiri Hajek, the man who explains this to me in his distant suburban villa, was Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1968; later, he was one of the first three spokesmen of Charter 77 (Jan Patocka, the late philosopher, and Havel were the other two). It was the regime's habit, he continues, to hit "to teach a lesson" and then relax for a while. Only this time it miscalculated. The clubbed students numbered in the thousands. Soon they were surrounded by hundreds of thousands of others. Since Gorbachev would not send in the tanks, the regime was doomed.

Jan Sokol, a computer specialist, translator of philosophy and Patocka's son-in-law, puts it more graphically: "The police [are] like penicillin. If there is real resistance after the first shock, [they're] just no use." He is reluctant to speak of revolt or revolution. The image he prefers is that of the crumbling of a rotten construction: "You breathe and it collapses." Whatever the cause, it happened quickly. The dissidents, the Chartists, were no longer alone. After the students came the artists and the intellectuals, followed by the urban population at large. When on November 27 the workers

'Godot Is Here'

On December 20, 1989, two days before Samuel Beckett's death, I delivered to Vaclav Havel in Prague a signed manuscript copy of Beckett's *Catastrophe*. In 1982 Beckett dedicated the play to Havel, then serving a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence. Beckett, whose plays were banned in Czechoslovakia by the Communist regime, became a hero to the opposition there. A poster circulated depicting a gagged Beckett and bearing the legend, "If Samuel Beckett had been born in Czechoslovakia, we'd still be waiting for Godot." Now, outside the Civic Forum office in Wenceslas Square, there were posters proclaiming "Godot Is Here." Havel, whose works expose the absurdities of the totalitarian state, regards Beckett and Harold Pinter as his masters. And never has absurdism seemed more real than in Kafka's Prague after the revolution. Only nine days after I delivered the manuscript to him, Havel became President of Czechoslovakia.

Upon receiving the manuscript, Havel commented, "After Samuel Beckett, we live in a different world than we did before him." He called Beckett "a man who was the most important playwright in the twentieth century and who influenced all other important playwrights of our century."

Havel had not read *Catastrophe* until after his release from prison in 1983, and immediately he wrote a play in response, *The Mistake*. "The two plays together added to each other and were supportive of each other," Havel told me. "I hope by saying that, I am not suggesting that I am equal as a playwright to Samuel Beckett."

The Mistake is the only dramatic work Havel has written that is based on his prison experience. In it a gang of convicted criminals tries to establish its dominance over a new arrival, who does not respond to flattery, threats or violence. They conclude he is "some kind of a bloody foreigner" and hasn't the slightest idea what is demanded of him. There is no communication whatsoever.

When I informed Havel that Beckett was dying in Paris, he was deeply moved and spoke of visiting him after the question of the presidency was resolved. That was not to be. A personal message he sent to Beckett was never delivered.

The day Beckett died I was again in Havel's office. Outside, students (who did not know of the death) chanted "Godot has arrived" and "Havel to Kafka's castle." We talked of revolution and theater, and Havel said, "This revolution had strange and dramatic aspects. It was classic drama, absurd antidrama."

Sitting there with Havel, I was reminded of the December day, thirteen years before, when I sat with Andrei Sakharov in the kitchen of his Moscow flat. Sakharov, who was then writing the letter on human rights that had such a profound influence on Jimmy Carter, told me, "A man may hope for nothing yet nonetheless must speak because he cannot remain silent." Havel put it differently: "When a person behaves in keeping with his conscience, when he tries to speak the truth and when he tries to behave as a citizen even under conditions where citizenship is degraded, it may not lead to anything, yet it might. But what surely will not lead to anything is when a person calculates whether it will lead to something or not."

Both men would have agreed with what Beckett said in his play *Worstward Ho*: "Try again, fail again, fail better." And now, in their separate ways, they have succeeded.

MARTIN GARBUS

Martin Garbus, a New York City lawyer active in human rights causes, is advising the Czechoslovak government on drafting its Constitution and new laws.

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joined a token two-hour strike the Communist Party knew it was all over. The transfer of power had begun.

It remains to be seen why, particularly with a party headed by the "normalizers" who brought Soviet order to Czechoslovakia, this transfer of power was carried out quietly, with kid gloves. There are two explanations. The first was best summed up for me by Jiri Pechar, a translator of Proust and Freud, among others. In addition to fear, a feeling of humiliation caused popular apathy. For a spell, in 1968, ordinary people had thought they were actors in their own drama. Then, brutally cast aside, they felt impotent and cheated. By showing that one could have an impact on events, the students gave them hope again, and in this mood of restored dignity even a Schweik was ready to march in step with the rest.

Hejdanek had a less exalted explanation. People are against violent reprisals because they themselves do not feel above reproach. The huge crowd first cheered Ladislav Adamec, the Communist Prime Minister who began serious negotiations with the opposition, because he was, like themselves, a reformed character. It was only when he urged them not to strike that they began whistling to show their disapproval. I grasped this aspect better when Jan Urban, the bright and handsome information man at the forum, told me how he became a dissident. As a schoolteacher he had refused to sign a petition against Charter 77 and at once became an outcast. For the "normalizers," at that time passivity was not enough.

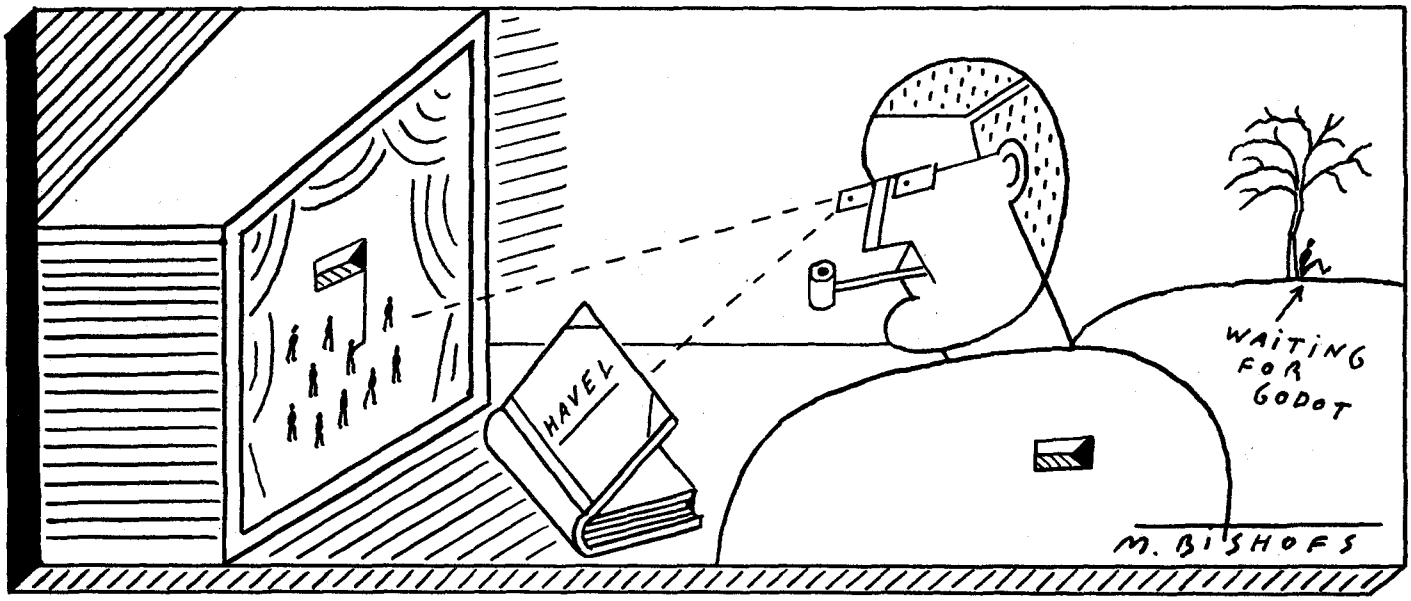
Presidential Paradox

There was an additional factor: Why use violence when it is not necessary? After the initial bloodshed the two sides developed symbolic confrontation into a fine art. There was a round table where all parties were represented, but the Communist Party and the Civic Forum were the main protagonists. While they debated, the forum applied public pressure with student demonstrations and the threat of a general strike. (People joke that Wenceslas Square thus returns to its function as a place for horse trading.) This tactic forced the C.P. to move from never to maybe and then to a reluctant acceptance. In this fashion it gave up in quick succession its monopoly on power, its "leading role" in the country and, though it retained the office of Prime Minister, effective control over the government.

This last event was significant. Through some miscalculation, Adamec produced a government that was too heavily weighted with party members and thus lost the support of the forum. He had to resign from the premiership (he has since been elected chair—the new title for the top leader—of the C.P.). He was succeeded as Prime Minister by a younger and unknown party colleague, Marian Calfa. Since Calfa is a Slovak and there is an understanding that a balance of power must be preserved between Czechs and Slovaks (there are more than 10 million Czechs and half that number of Slovaks), the next president should be a Czech.

Indeed, by mid-December, while I was here in Prague, the latest confrontation was over the presidency of the republic, a trial of strength revealing in full the Czechoslovak capacity for paradox. On one side the Communists, hitherto not particularly fond of universal suffrage, had converted suddenly to electoral democracy. They sought to alter the Constitution to have the president elected not by Parliament but by the direct vote of the people or, as they were calling it incongruously here, by "referendum." The position of the forum was no less surprising. These fighters for truth and champions of genuine democracy wanted the next president to be chosen by a Parliament composed of stooges and timeservers.

Obviously there was some method behind this apparent madness. The Communists were playing for time, particularly on the eve of their extraordinary congress, and they were also hoping to divide the opposition; with Havel and Dubcek as candidates this was not an absurd assumption. The Civic Forum also had valid arguments. It supported the Czechoslovak tradition of parliamentary democracy, in which the president was more a referee than a party political leader and was not elected directly by the people. It wanted to waste no time and install Havel as a guarantor that the parliamentary elections, to be held by next summer, will



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be genuinely free. It also warned the C.P. that a confrontation over the presidency might whip up anti-Communist feeling in the country. Uncharitable critics pointed out that the forum did not mention another consideration, namely, that Havel was still not sufficiently known outside the cities and the intelligentsia and therefore might not do too well in a national vote, particularly with Dubcek also running.

Finally, this impasse was also cleared. The students from all over the country having duly invaded Prague and the Communists having held their congress, a deal was struck. On December 29, wearing an elegant suit made specially for the occasion, Vaclav Havel was elected President by the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly; all the Communist deputies voted for him. Previously, Alexander Dubcek had been elected chair of the Assembly. The two men were thus seemingly united.

But the full story about their rivalry has not yet been told. Before tackling that matter, which is emblematic of the relationship between the two Czechoslovak "springs," let us have a quick glance at the spearhead of this quiet revolution, the students.

Students for What Kind of a Democratic Society?

Students were the only ones to stay on strike. They became Havel's chief electoral agents. At the School of Fine Arts, at the entrance of which is a reproduction of the Victory of Samothrace next to a huge Warhol-like can of Coca-Cola, they were all busy producing posters for his presidential campaign. The student showing us around explained that they were conceived in collaboration with artists and other professionals at the Manes, an art gallery that has become the revolution's exhibition hall and workshop. There, an intellectual named Bohuslav Blazek, bubbling with ideas, gives me a course on posters. The most popular one, combining a smile face like an "O" with an "F," the whole in national tricolor (blue and red on white), was the result of a competition. "We had set three criteria: It had to be catchy, joyful, dancing; using two colors but surviving in one; simple enough to be drawn by a child. The winner was a second-year student, not a professional." Some posters are highly didactic (schoolchildren telling their teacher, "Madam, you don't have to tell us lies any longer") or witty ("who's afraid of the opposition is really afraid for his position"). The walls of Prague do not quite have the surrealist verve of Paris in 1968, but they are tidier, with scribblings put on paper and neatly taped to the wall.

To find out the politics of these well-behaved heroes I go to the faculty of philosophy (the generic term used here for all the liberal arts). While the strike committee ends its meeting, a student from the school of interpreters practices her skills. She starts her explanation with the main student achievement. All faculties are now run by an elected council in which students account for half the membership and teachers and the administrative staff for the other half. The compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism have been abolished. Students are trying to get rid of bad teachers appointed for political reasons and to reinstate those purged after 1968. When I ask whether students voted to choose between Dubcek and Havel for President, she clearly thinks I am crazy. No, there was no need to. Were they against Dubcek because he stood for socialism? No, she snapped back, we are for socialism, but he is nearly 70 and stands for the past; his ideas are old hat. I have the impression that the tall and gentle-looking member of the strike committee who has joined us would not have expressed himself for socialism so automatically. He insists on the need for a normal life, the rule of law, the defense of the individual against the state. He wouldn't care whether some individuals earned 3,000 crowns and some 30,000, so long as one could live decently on the former amount. The interview, I confess, turned into a discussion. Shouldn't the workers, I suggested, have as much say in running their factories as the students now have in their universities? He agreed. But that, I said, is closer to socialism than anything the Czechoslovaks have been offered up to now under that same name. We ended uneasily, talking about the difficulty of communicating. An enduring refrain.

Martin Klima, the spokesman at the students' general strike committee, was very precise. With a Prague committee and a coordinating one for the whole of Czechoslovakia meeting every day and then having its decisions approved by general assemblies, the movement had a democratic and efficient system at its disposal. He was still stunned by the course of events. Originally, he thought he would end in jail. He was surprised by the popular support. He didn't expect the workers to act until there was a real economic crisis. No, it's not true that the students underestimated the potentially crucial role of the workers. "On the contrary," he said, "we went to the factories from the very start carrying leaflets, telling them the news, taking them to the theaters for discussion. Now this is done by the press and television. With Havel President, we can go back to school." And tomorrow? "In twenty years' time, my child will be a left-wing radical and will rebel against me."

Did this parting quip contain a gentle hint that their revolution might usher in a conservative society? For once I am not entirely convinced by Hejdanek's suggestion that "if the students are not openly socialist, it is because they don't understand themselves." True, the appeal of the Greens among the young Czechoslovaks is undeniable. At the demonstrations in Wenceslas Square the Austrian Greenpeace bus had a tremendous success and all the young were afterward carrying stickers saying "Stop CSSRnobyl" (the initials standing for Czechoslovakia, with the first "C" pronounced "ch"). But one also senses among the students a deep yearning for "normalcy," and for the moment "normal" is associated with the capitalist West. The psychological price for normalization is, understandably, very high.

Dubcek and the Shadow of '68

In the December issue of *Lidové Noviny*, together with a Havel editorial titled "Goodbye *Samizdat*," there is a grim Thurber-like cartoon. A naked, shapeless, middle-aged woman faces a nonplussed man of her generation standing in a door in his dressing gown. The caption reads: "How is it that you don't recognize me! I am your dream of 1968."

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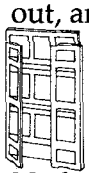
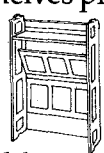
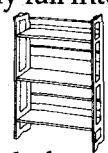


1. Comes in flat carton



2. Shelves fall into place



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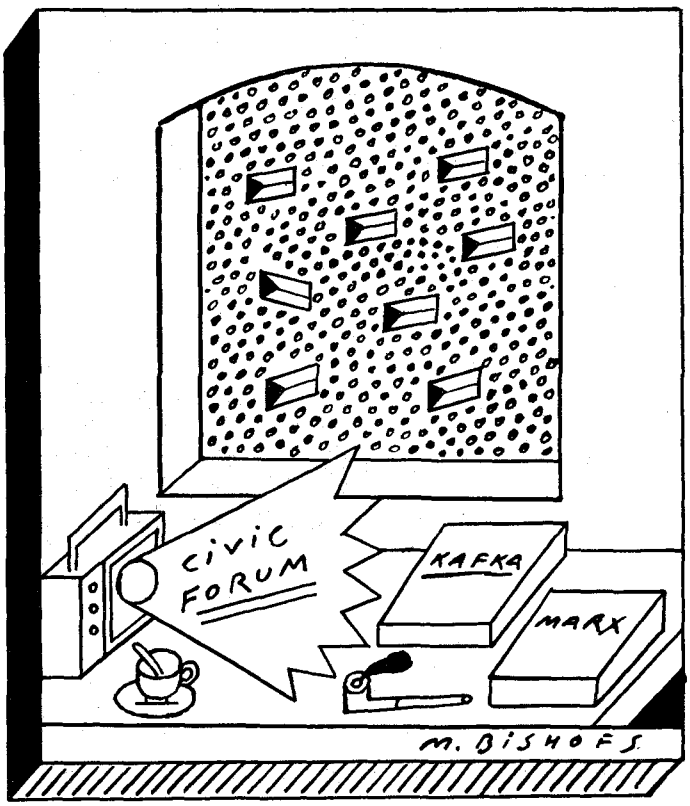
This image haunts me as I think of the strange case of Dubcek's vanishing candidacy.

The facts first. According to Milos Hajek of *Obroda* ("Rebirth"), a group of ex-party Sixty-Eighters now part of the Civic Forum, even before the events of December they had decided to put up Dubcek as a symbolic candidate for the presidency when the term came, and Havel agreed with this last September. Then the crisis of November altered the timetable dramatically. On the 23rd Dubcek triumphantly emerged from internal exile in Bratislava. The next day he was hailed by the crowd in Prague. According to his friends, he then went back home convinced that he was still the main candidate of the opposition. What happened then is guesswork. Some people suggest that the appearance on television of Zdenek Mlynar, one of the leaders of the Prague Spring returned from abroad, mobilized the anti-Communists within the Civic Forum.

Back to the facts: On December 7 Vaclav Havel said for the first time that, if he had to, he would accept the presidency; immediately after this, Calfa, a Slovak like Dubcek, was chosen Prime Minister. There followed a strange duel with flowers, Havel proclaiming that he needed Dubcek standing by his side and the latter quietly repeating that he was still a candidate. When I left Prague, Dubcek's friends still didn't know what Havel had promised him to get him to accept the chairmanship of the Federal Assembly.

Let there be no misunderstanding. Dubcek is not beyond reproach. Chartists who spent long spells in jail are perfectly entitled to criticize his moderation, his attitude in 1968-69, his naïve faith in the Soviet Union. They may also claim that he brings a symbolic language, not a political platform. Yet it is no secret, particularly in the West, that Dubcek is also being attacked for quite different reasons.



Twenty years after the Prague Spring, what is really being questioned is not socialism's more or less ugly face but its very essence. It is within this context that the role of Havel must be examined.

Cincinnatus to the Pen?

This is not the place to draw a portrait of the gifted playwright who achieved political greatness through sheer courage and who now has a career thrust upon him. The fact that he comes from an upper-class background is irrelevant for our purpose since, in his view, it only made him more aware of social inequity. More significant, because of that background he has always been an outsider. The debate over the nature of socialism, whether spurious or genuine, has always been alien to him. Some people may consider that this true liberal democrat of unquestioned moral standing would be the best man to preside over a fairly rapid transition to a capitalist democracy.

Two connected questions inevitably spring to mind. The first is about Havel's intentions. Does he still propose merely to watch over the democratic election of a new Parliament? Asked at a press conference on December 19 whether he might serve a second term, he replied that nobody would want to nominate him after the first. In the case of a professional politician this coyness would be interpreted as a bid for re-election. In Havel's case it does raise some doubts about the promptness with which he will return to his writing table.

The second question is even more immediate. As soon as the parties are registered and the laws passed, the parliamentary campaign will begin. Will the Civic Forum simply supervise the democratic process or will it act as the main political force? In other words, will it, like Solidarity in Poland, give its label to chosen candidates, ask for a blank check in the name of freedom and democracy and present the bill afterward? The main argument for cohesion, for "strength through unity," was that the opposition was weak and the Communist Party mighty. Now that the party has fallen apart before their very eyes, what the Czechoslovak people need is a proper debate, with programs, proposals and, after this heady gust of freedom, concrete projects of economic reform. With Vaclav Klaus, a monetarist, appointed Minister of Finance, working people may also want to know what it will cost them.

Monetarism With a Human Face?

Czechoslovakia is not Poland. One can see this in the shops, in the streets, in people's homes. The only lines I have seen during my stay here were fairly short ones for exotic fruits and newspapers. On December 21 I was shocked to see one stretching for more than half a mile; it was for Havel's recently published book. But the Czechoslovaks do not compare themselves with the Poles. They rightly look to the Austrians. When Eastern Europe was cut off from the international division of labor, the fairly well-industrialized Czechoslovakia suffered the most. Now, though less urgent than Poland's, its crisis is no less serious and it is both economic and ecological, as is explained to me by Josif

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Vavrousek, one of Havel's close collaborators.

We must restructure our economy, he argues, drastically reduce the consumption of energy and raw materials, notably the highly polluting brown coal. We have been getting the worst of both worlds. The planners didn't plan. The huge plants had their representatives in the government. The Soviet Union provided an important market and will continue to do so, he says, but we cannot stick to old patterns of production. Indeed, Czechoslovakia can innovate with health care products or "environmentally friendly" technology. This will be useful for home as well as foreign consumption, and it is important to fight pollution before, not after the fact. Pollution is also the plague of Czechoslovakia's fairly efficient agriculture, he says, which must go back from the overconcentration of the last fifteen years to smaller collective farms. Up to now the Civic Forum has been changing people at the top; it will soon have to change the structure of the state, decentralize, grant more autonomy. But there is no plan to privatize big industry as the Poles intend to do. Indeed, Vavrousek says, we should revive some of the 1968 ideas on workers' councils and other forms of self-management.

I am most pleasantly surprised. On the plane coming in, I saw that the *Financial Times* published an article co-written by Klaus before his appointment. It was a monetarist profession of faith, admittedly *à la Tchèque*, with warnings against zeal and social blindness, but Friedmanite nevertheless. When I tell him my surprise, Vavrousek concedes that there are various political complexions within the forum and adds that the Deputy Prime Minister, Valtr Komarek, though from the same institute as Klaus, is more pragmatic, more aware of social problems. Indeed, the economic policy will ultimately depend on social pressure and resistance.

What's Left of the Left?

Having written the headline, I see the problem. Where do you put the Communist Party, particularly in Czechoslovakia, where it was associated with the invader and had expelled its reformers after 1969? Judging by the extraordinary congress I watched on December 20-21, you put it into the proverbial dustbin of history. The Slovaks carried out their own purge before they came to the congress: In their new central committee of ninety-three only three are old-timers. The Czechoslovak party has not gone quite as far. Its new chair, the 63-year-old Adamec, is no newcomer, and 37-year-old Vasil Mohorita, the new first secretary, was hitherto head of the Union of Socialist Youth. Most of the leaders of yesterday, however, were thrown overboard. So was "democratic centralism": Open factions were allowed at the party congress, and the so-called Democratic Forum, regrouping self-proclaimed Communist reformers, was holding press conferences and distributing its own texts. Officially, out of some 1.7 million members only 66,000 have left the party since November. How many timeservers will follow

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once they grasp that the party card is no longer a passport to a career? Can the C.P. here ever recover any kind of moral stature? Meanwhile, it is groping for a raison d'être.

One should look for the left within the Civic Forum. *Obroda*, while respected, is so far a club for veterans of the political wars. There are two budding social democratic parties competing for support and also a radical left alternative. Indeed, it will be fascinating to watch how various social interests forge their own instruments of expression. It is sadder to recognize the ideological climate in which this process is taking place. For Jan Patocka's son-in-law, for Rudolf Slansky, son of the famous victim of a Stalinist trial, for many others, the very wording of my question about Czechoslovakia's future is visibly distasteful. For them capitalism and socialism are obsolete terms. They prefer to talk of a passage from totalitarianism to democracy, from a command economy to a free market. They are not bothered by social inequities if the system is efficient. Quite a few people here talk like our Western establishment. (In fairness it must be added that they also have a moral distaste for our commercial culture.) Moreover, quite a number of people believe socialism really existed here, and nobody so far is presenting a comprehensive alternative radical project. And so the prospects look quite favorable for Klaus and company.

And yet many people remain convinced that Czechoslovakia will seek a third way. In addition to the argument about prewar roots, they mention the attachment of the Czechoslovaks to their social security and other forms of welfare, the by now profound belief in social justice and equality, as well as the strength of the labor movement. Having talked to many people in Prague, including the organizers of the general strike, I was struck by how little is known about the mood of the workers. The last thing the new leadership wants is for the labor movement to re-enter the political stage with more than a token strike, and this apprehension will act as an additional brake on monetarism.

In civilized Czechoslovakia, a political typhoon sweeps the country without claiming a single fatality. Many people in Prague talk about pinching themselves in the morning just to be sure they are not dreaming. There is an extraordinary, palpable feeling of the end of an era. I felt it myself on my last day as I went to visit the palace where the Bolsheviks had founded their party back in 1912. I walked through this huge Lenin Museum, decorated in Stalinist splendor, a lonely figure watched by the ushers. I then had a feeling of history's irony in the superb Old Town Square, where one is overwhelmed by styles and centuries. On the Baroque Kinsky Palace there is a plaque commemorating the Communist coup of 1948 and quoting the words of Klement Gottwald, the first Communist President, who said it "rendered impossible the restoration of capitalism on our soil." Below, the date and the occasion were hidden by a sticker saying "Havel to the castle."

Since the playwright-President had on many occasions insisted on the meaninglessness of such words as "the left" or "socialism" in Czechoslovakia, I tried to get him to comment on the substance rather than the term. "Your colleague Molière invented the character M. Jourdain, talking prose without knowing it," I said at a press conference. "Could you imagine Czechoslovakia forging a new form of democratic socialism not without knowing it but without saying it?" I got a cool, noncommittal reply: "The Czechoslovaks will build what they wish and then give it a name." Quite clearly the future will be what the Czechoslovaks make it. But I prefer to end with the words of Hejdanek, which are valid for the turmoil in all of Eastern Europe: "People know what they don't want; they do not yet know what they do want." The battle for their minds has only begun. □

REVOLUTION OF '89

The Dawn, So Far, Is in the East

To keep our readers abreast of the changes sparked by events in Europe, we asked a number of people in the Nation *orbit to comment on the following: "The revolution of '89 – what it means, where it's heading, what is to be done." Herewith, the first response. We will publish further responses in future issues.* — *The Editors*

NOAM CHOMSKY

Throughout modern history, popular forces motivated by radical democratic ideals have sought to combat structures of hierarchy and domination. Sometimes they succeed in expanding the realm of freedom and justice before being brought to heel. Often they are simply crushed.

October 1917 provides an example with renewed relevance for today. The Bolshevik coup eliminated working-class and other popular organizations and imposed harsh state rule. The total destruction of nascent socialist elements has since been interpreted as a victory for socialism. For the West, the purpose was to defame socialism; for the Bolsheviks, to extract what gain they could from the moral force of the hopes they were demolishing. Authentic socialist ideals have been unable to withstand this two-pronged assault.

The past decade in Central America illustrates the standard pattern. The proliferation of unions, peasant associations and other popular organizations threatened to provide the basis for democracy and social reform. This prospect elicited a violent response, with slaughter, torture and general misery, leaving societies "affected by terror and panic," "collective intimidation and generalized fear" and "internalized acceptance of the terror," in the words of the Salvadoran church. Early efforts in Nicaragua to direct resources to the poor majority led Washington to initiate economic and ideological warfare, and outright terrorism, to

Noam Chomsky is professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His latest book is Necessary Illusions *(South End Press).*

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punish these transgressions by reducing life to the zero grade. Such actions are considered a success insofar as the challenge to U.S. power and privilege is rebuffed and the targets are properly chosen. Killing priests is not clever but peasant organizers, union leaders and human rights activists are fair game.

Remarkably, recent events in Eastern Europe depart from the norm. As the fragile tyrannies collapse under a popular uprising, Moscow is not only refraining from intervention but even encouraging these developments alongside significant internal changes. The contrast to Central America and other U.S. domains could hardly be more dramatic.

The striking asymmetry is highlighted by the U.S. reaction to Moscow's moves. There is little thought that the United States might relax its grip over its own domains, or act to mitigate the horrors that prevail there. Rather, the question is how best to exploit the retraction of Soviet power to achieve U.S. designs. The test of Gorbachev's "new thinking" is his willingness to withdraw support from those whom the United States seeks to crush. Only if Gorbachev permits us to have our way will he prove his good faith. As recent events in Panama reveal, the United States continues to claim the right to achieve its ends by violence, on pretexts so transparently absurd that refutation is hardly necessary.

This pattern prevails worldwide. Thus in the Middle East, for almost twenty years Washington has blocked a broad international consensus on a diplomatic settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the current version, the official "peace process" is restricted to the Baker-Shamir-Peres plan, with its "basic premise" that there can be no "additional Palestinian state" between Israel and Jordan and no change in the status of the territories "other than in accordance with the basic guidelines of the [Israeli] Government," which rules out any meaningful Palestinian rights. *The New York Times* observes that "with the exception of the United States, not one nation has endorsed the plan," though Moscow is now trying to become a "team player," abandoning its "policy of confrontation" and its "radical positions"—that is, its advocacy of a two-state settlement that recognizes the national rights of Israel and the Palestinians. In short, the world is out of step, and unless the Soviet Union becomes a "team player" by joining us off the spectrum of world opinion and adopting our rejectionist stance, it is plainly not serious about détente.

The U.S. response to the events in Eastern Europe should be seen in a broader context. Since the 1950s both superpowers have been declining in their capacity to coerce and control. The Vietnam War, in particular, harmed the U.S. economy while benefiting its major rivals, Europe and Japan. As has long been observed, a new global order has been taking shape, with three major blocs: one dominated by the United States, another by Japan, and the third a European system dominated by Germany. Western Europe is reconstructing traditional quasi-colonial relations with the East, and Japan is likely to follow suit. Such developments could make the United States a second-class power. It is not surprising that the prospects arouse deep concern.

In the mid-1940s, U.S. planners were ambivalent about unification of Europe. In the circumstances of the postwar world, it was feared that the Russians had the advantage in the political game; this advantage had to be canceled, with West Germany "walled off" from Soviet influence, in George Kennan's phrase. Meanwhile, labor and other popular forces were undermined and the traditional order largely restored. The British Foreign Office favored the partition of Germany to bar Soviet influences, viewing "economic and ideological infiltration" from the East as "something very like aggression." Eisenhower also regarded "Soviet political aggression" as the real danger, and saw NATO as a barrier against this threat.

Stalin's 1952 proposal to unify Germany with free elections was flatly rejected because of his condition that a reunited Germany not join a U.S.-run military alliance, a sine qua non for any Soviet leadership. Had this and later initiatives been pursued, there might have been no Berlin wall and no Soviet invasions of East Berlin, Budapest and Prague. Currently the United States looks askance at moves toward European integration that might strengthen its major rivals on the world scene while undermining the U.S. influence that results from East-West confrontation and the pact system.

Détente raises further problems here. What John Kennedy called the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy" has been regularly invoked to mobilize support for intervention abroad and state industrial management at home. Now these policies are jeopardized as the threat loses its credibility.

The policies have deep institutional roots. The crucial planning document, N.S.C. 68, written just before the Korean War, warned of "a decline in economic activity of serious proportions" without a government stimulus through military spending. One function of the Pentagon system has been to insure that the public provides the costs of R&D and a state-guaranteed market for advanced industry while profits accrue to the private sector, a gift to the corporate manager. Thus, business has always been troubled by what *The Wall Street Journal* calls "the unsettling specter of peace," and it grasps at the hope that a capital-intensive and high-tech military will still provide, as Gen. Edward Meyer assured, "a big business out there for industry."

Despite the inefficiency and costs, such devices will not be easy to replace. It has long been taken for granted that large-scale government intervention is essential to maintain private economic power, but nonmilitary forms, however feasible in narrow economic terms, have unwelcome side effects. They tend to interfere with managerial prerogatives,

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organize new constituencies, redistribute income and in other ways foster democracy and reform, thus conflicting with the basic goals of social policy designed by the privileged. Military Keynesianism has none of those defects.

The "economic miracles" of the First World depart still further from pure capitalist principles, notably Japan and the "Four Tigers" on its periphery (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong), with economies coordinated by the state and industrial-financial conglomerates. Their successes are hardly a tribute to capitalism or democracy. Here, the sectors that remain competitive are those that feed from the public trough: high-tech industry and capital-intensive agriculture, as well as pharmaceuticals and others. Free enterprise is a suitable theme for rousing oratory, but only so long as the handout from Washington is secure. To be sure, capitalist doctrines will do just fine for the former colonies—and now, it is hoped, Eastern Europe—to facilitate their own exploitation.

As for democratic forms, at best they are limited under the constraints imposed by private command of resources and investment decisions, and in recent years the lack of substantive content has become a virtual cliché.

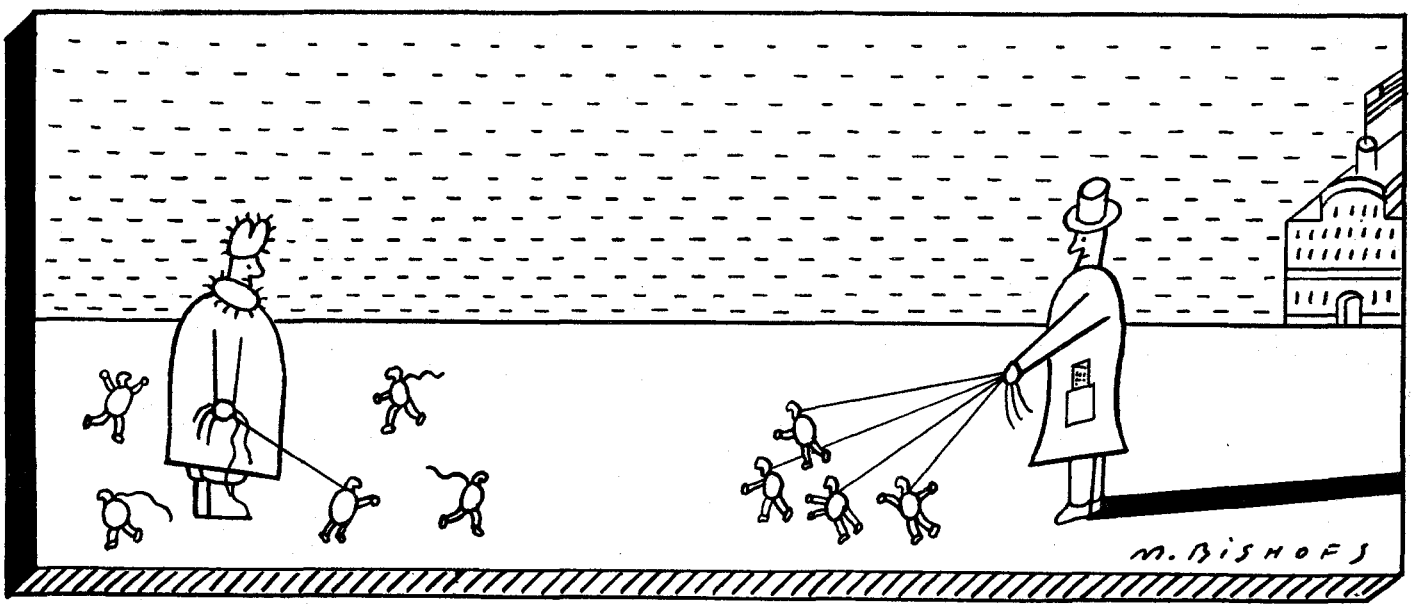
The United States sought to construct a global system in which other industrial powers pursue "regional interests" within the overall framework of order managed from Washington, as Henry Kissinger admonished the European allies. Meanwhile the Third World is to "fulfill its function" as a market and source of raw materials and cheap labor. Every effort will be made to direct Eastern Europe on the same course. High-level planning documents frankly identify the major threat to U.S. interests as "nationalistic regimes" that are responsive to popular pressures rather than the needs of investors. These concerns underlie persistent U.S. subversion and intervention on the pretext of Soviet threats, the correlation between U.S. aid and human rights violations and the extreme hostility to democracy unless power remains securely in the hands of business, oligarchy and military elements that respect U.S. priorities. Gorbachev's initiatives provide only the occasion for tactical adjustments; policy and its roots are unchallenged, and virtually excluded from discussion within the ideological system.

With the decline of U.S. power and the diversification of the international order, however, traditional goals become more difficult to achieve. Further problems arise from internal dissidence and the loss of the Soviet threat as an instrument of population control. It is natural that the U.S. reaction to Gorbachev's moves and the European accommodation to them should be halting and uncertain.

Since the latter days of the Indochina war, U.S. elites have undertaken intensive efforts to increase corporate profits, weaken unions and the welfare system, temper the "crisis of democracy" by restoring public apathy, and strengthen state-corporate linkages. They have also sought to solidify the U.S.-controlled bloc, incorporating Canada and viable sectors of Latin America while maintaining traditional domains elsewhere. But the world is increasingly out of control as well as out of step.

Soviet military expenditures began to level off in the mid-1970s—contrary to what was claimed to justify the Carter-Reagan military buildup and attack on social programs—and are declining as Gorbachev attempts to rescue the stagnant command economy. While Reagan Administration militancy may have hindered these developments, it did not stop them, and by the mid-1980s Washington was compelled to reduce its aggressiveness, hysterical rhetoric and military growth as the costs of Reaganite economic mismanagement became unacceptable. Fortuitously, both superpowers, for independent reasons, are on a path away from confrontation.

With Bolshevism disintegrating, capitalism long abandoned and state capitalist democracy in decline, there are prospects for the revival of libertarian socialist and radical democratic ideals that had languished, including popular control of the workplace and investment decisions, and, correspondingly, the entrenchment of political democracy as constraints imposed by private power are reduced. These and other emerging possibilities are still remote, but are no less exciting than the dramatic events unfolding in Eastern Europe. □



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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Provoking Engagement

MARILYN HACKER

NAMING OUR DESTINY: New and Selected Poems. *By June Jordan. Thunder's Mouth Press. 211 pp. $24.95. Paper $12.95.*

June Jordan's new book is an anthology of causes won, lost, moot, private and public, forgotten and remembered. Anyone who doubts the relevance and timeliness of poetry ought to read Jordan, who has been among the front-line correspondents for almost thirty years and is still a young and vital writer. So should anyone who wants his or her curiosity and indignation aroused, or wants to read a voice that makes itself heard on the page.

There are as many kinds of poetry as there are novels and plays. But some critics, who would not fault a novel of social protest for failing to be a novel of manners or a *nouveau roman*, seem to want all poetry to fit one mold. June Jordan epitomizes a particular kind and strength of American poetry: that of the politically engaged poet whose commitment is as seamlessly joined to her work as it is to her life.

What makes politically engaged poetry unique, and primarily poetry before it is politics? Jordan's political poetry is, at its best, the opposite of polemic. It is not written with a preconceived, predigested agenda of ideas and images. Rather, the process of composition is, or reproduces, the process of discovering how events are connected, how oppressions are analogous, how lives interpenetrate. Jordan's poems are strongest when they deal with interior issues, when she begins with a politics of the personal, with the articulate and colloquial voice of, if you will, "a woman speaking to women" (and to men) and ranges outward to illustrate how issues, lives and themes are inextricably interconnected. One of the most powerful examples is "Poem About My Rights," first published in 1980, which begins as an interior monologue of a woman angry because, as a woman, the threat of rape and violence keeps her from going where she pleases when she pleases:

> . . . without changing my clothes my shoes
> my body posture my gender identity my age
> my status as a woman alone in the evening/
> alone on the streets/ alone not being the point
> the point being that I can't do what I want
> to do with my own body because I am the wrong
> sex the wrong age the wrong skin

But she moves from the individual instances to the laws defining rape, and from rape to other questions of violation:

> which is exactly like South Africa
> penetrating into Namibia penetrating into
> Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if
> Pretoria ejaculates

then deftly to Nkrumah and Lumumba, also in the wrong place at the wrong time, and to her own father, who was at once "wrong" himself as a working-class black male in his daughter's Ivy League college cafeteria and an oppressor who defined his child by her deficiencies. When Jordan concludes this poem with a defiant challenge to anyone seeking to physically or ideologically circumscribe her, we believe her and have made leaps—possibly new ones—of consciousness.

She uses a similar technique of accumulating incident/fact/detail in "Gettin Down to Get Over," a poem for her mother which swells to a litany of praise for black women and the African-American family. "Free Flight," another late-night stream of consciousness, though it stays closer to the "personal," builds momentum and depth with Whitmanesque inclusiveness to consider the humorously identical possibilities of consolation by a female or a male lover before settling on self-respect as the best way to get through the night.

Where Jordan is unlike Whitman is in her creation of a quirky, fallible persona (apart from her creation of personae that are clearly different from that of the poet), an alter ego by which readers accustomed to identifying the poet with the speaker of a poem may sometimes be taken aback, if not shocked.

Jordan plays skillfully with this post-Whitman, post-Williams but also post-Romantic expectation in "Poem From Taped Testimony in the Tradition of Bernhard Goetz," an ironically issue-oriented dramatic monologue which transcends its headline-bound issue. Jordan's speaker breathlessly appropriates to a black perspective the reasoning Goetz used to justify arming himself and firing on black youths in the New York City subway. Is a black woman who has suffered every kind of violence from ridicule and exclusion to invisibility, battery and rape at the hands of whites also justified in assuming the worst and acting accordingly? Justified if she carries a gun and fires not on a racist cop or armed rapist but on the white woman beside her at an artists' colony dinner table whose loose-cannon talk was the last straw? The poem is at once horrifying and funny, as a tall tale is meant to be, and hard to dismiss (even if, "logically," a reader who rejected Goetz's reasoning would reject that of Jordan's speaker as well).

The inevitability and passion of this poem, as well as its wit, will keep it valid and readable after the "issue" of Goetz is forgotten. The connection between being spat at on the way to third grade, seeing a neighborhood friend beaten by the police, being ignored in a New England drugstore and being raped in a college town may not necessarily be apparent to all white (or even black male) readers. It's to Jordan's credit that she concretizes the link by juxtaposition, with the accelerating energy of deceptively ordinary speech. From her opening she establishes not only her speedy and frenetic "I" but the "they" that is, more than any "I," the opposite of "thou": the "they" that, be its antecedent "blacks," "whites," "Jews," "Muslims," "women" or "men," is the essential evil agent in any prejudiced discourse. Describing an incident that was perhaps only an eye contact made or avoided, the speaker here is confused—paranoid, the reader might think—or is she?

> . . . I mean you didn't
> necessarily see some kind of a smile
> or hear them laughing but I could feel
> it like I could feel I could always
> feel this shiver thing this fear take
> me over when I would have to come into a room
> full of them and I would be by myself
> and they would just look at you know what

Marilyn Hacker's Going Back to the River, *a new volume of poetry, will be published by Random House in March.*

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I mean you can't know what I mean
you're not Black.

Of course Jordan's proposition is farcically surreal, exaggerated to show the fallaciousness of its white equivalent, absurd (as the murder of twenty-two black children in Atlanta, the murder of fourteen women students in Montreal, the murder of one homeless man in New York's 103d Street subway station, are absurd; they all died for being "they" to someone). Nonetheless, a reader somewhere will categorize Jordan as a rabble-rousing reverse racist, missing the point of her "Modest Proposal": the quantum leap from grievance to slaughter and the culturally triggered impulse to jump it.

How can a white critic say that a black poet has a spectacular sense of rhythm? Modestly, or courageously. Jordan writes (mostly) free verse. Many writers of free verse produce a kind of syntactically disjointed prose, expecting line breaks to provide a concentration and a syncopation not achieved by means of language. In Jordan's best poems there is a strong, audible, rhythmic counterpoint to the line breaks, a rhythm as apparent to the reader as it is to the auditor who hears the poet deliver them. This is true of her poems that have been set to music by Bernice Reagon of the a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock ("Alla Tha's All Right, but" and "A Song of Sojourner Truth"), but it's equally true of dramatic monologues like "The Talking Back of Miss Valentine Jones" and "Unemployment Monologue," and of the interior monologues evolving into public declaration, like "Poem About My Rights."

The fluid speech-become-aria quality of Jordan's free verse poems also makes them difficult to quote, though never difficult to remember. They are not made of lapidary lines and epigrammatic stanzas. They gather momentum verbally, aurally. Most often, the effects of the voice and the statement are cumulative.

Why is this important? Because it fixes the poems in the reader's memory; because it makes these poems, even those on the most serious subjects, paradoxically fun to read. It is a reason for these texts to be written in verse, to be poetry. They are not fiction, journalism, essays or any other form of prose, even when they share qualities with these other genres. When Jordan's poems are unambiguous and straightforward, as well as when they are figurative, ironic or complex, her words create a music, create voices, which readers must hear the way they were written: Her poems read themselves to us.

Like many contemporary poets, Jordan sometimes ventures back into fixed forms. There are five sonnets and a loose ghazal sequence among the forty-three new poems here. Unfortunately, in the new sonnets the poet too often uses grandiose statement and inflated diction as if they came with the form:

From Africa singing of justice and
grace
Your early verse sweetens the fame
of our Race.
("Something Like a Sonnet
for Phillis Miracle Wheatley")

Or she seems tone-deaf to the meter, which may always be broken, but for a purpose:

I admire the possibilities of flight and
space
without one move towards the ending
of my pain.
("A Sonnet from the Stony Brook")

She can also come up with a gem of a line like "A top ten lyric fallen to eleven" to refer to a fading love affair. Still, it's a long way from her best work, such as "The Reception," which depicts vividly imagined characters and action in iambic pentameter quatrains:

Doretha wore the short blue lace last
night
and William watched her drinking so
she fight
with him in flying collar slim-jim
orange
tie and alligator belt below the navel
pants uptight.

" . . . I flirt. Damned right. You
Look at me."
But William watched her carefully
his mustache shaky she could see
him jealous "which is how he always
be
at parties."

Some of Jordan's most successful poems are the farthest from polemic. They are vignettes, short dramatic monologues, observations of characters who may or may not be in some interaction with the narrator, like "Newport Jazz Festival," "Patricia's Poem" and "If You Saw a Negro Lady":

sitting on a Tuesday
near the whirl-sludge doors of
Horn & Hardart on the main drag
of downtown Brooklyn

solitary and inconspicuous as plain
and neat as walls impossible to
fresco and you watched her self-
conscious features shape about
a Horn & Hardart teaspoon
with a pucker from a cartoon
she would not understand
. . .
would you turn her treat
into surprise
observing

happy birthday

"The Madison Experience" expands this quick-take technique into a fourteen-part sequence that is a tender and surprising love song to one swath of Middle Western America. Its clean primary colors and color-blind courtesy impress the poet (who nevertheless "went out/ looking for traffic") as much as the juxtaposition of rain-washed fresh produce, a rally for Soweto and "fathers/for Equal Rights." As much as anything, Jordan appreciates an untroubled solitude:

Above the backyard mulberry tree
leaves a full moon
Not quite as high as the Himalaya
Mountains
not quite as high as the rents in
New York City
summons my mind into the meat and
mud
of things that sing

Jordan hints at but does not politicize an "incorrect" sexuality. There are love poems to men and love poems to women, to black and to white partners, poems in the aftermath of loving, poems on the erotic edge of friendship, love poems that (no surprise) broadcast mistrust, question the accepted definitions of relationships. There has been pressure in the past

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three decades on black writers and on feminist writers to put their personal lives on the line, or to make them toe one (revolutionary black heterosexual monogamy; radical feminist lesbian ditto). "The subject tonight for/public discussion is/our love," Jordan writes ironically in "Meta-Rhetoric." Her only manifesto on her private choices has been her refusal to let them be the subject of discussion, at once revealing and sufficiently circumspect to make either name-calling or roll-calling impossible.

Often the glancing, yearning glimpses through language are more suggestive, more erotic than a clear depiction would be. (The word "lesbian" occurs only once in Jordan's book: the poet "worried about unilateral words like Lesbian or Nationalist." The word "gay," usually but not always in reference to men, is positively stated and vindicated.)

Rape is a subject about which Jordan is unambiguous. It is not sexual in nature but violent, and it is, she illustrates, analogous to other forms of violence motivated by lust for power, by "thou" becoming "they." She is not speculating. She reveals that she has been raped twice: "the first occasion/being a whiteman and the most recent/situation being a blackman actually/head of the local NAACP" ("Case in Point"). Her poems re-examine these violations through description, through metaphor ("Rape Is Not a Poem") and through theory ("Poem About My Rights"). If there is a "silence peculiar/to the female" ("Case in Point"), it is that of the forcibly silenced. "Poem on the Road" reiterates, through other women's stories, that no racial combination explains or excuses sexual violence. I think the double betrayal of black-on-black assault makes her angriest.

Another depiction which is mercilessly specific is that of one particular black nuclear family: the poet's own, beleaguered from without, reproducing the conditions of oppression within. West Indian strivers (a postal worker and a nurse), her father tried to beat his "Black devil child" into submission while making sure she was educated for rebellion, while her mother personified both submission and endurance to her daughter. We meet these people on the first pages of *Naming Our Destiny* and are back in their kitchen in the last poem, written thirty years later. The effect is much that of reading a novel in which new points of view reveal different, complementary truths about a character or situation, cul-

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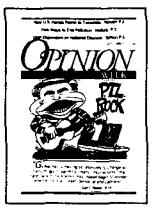

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minating in "War and Memory," which delineates how the dynamics of what we now call a dysfunctional family woke a bright child to the power of words and the possibility of dissent.

A *Selected Poems* is a second chance for an author and for readers. Work gone out of print can be rediscovered, the development and evolution of themes and style underlined. Poems bound too closely to an outdated topicality, or ones which are simply not good enough, can be cut out, thus placing the best-realized work into sharper relief. There are deleted poems I miss in this book: from *Things That I Do in the Dark*, "Uncle Bullboy" and the second "Talking Back of Miss Valentine Jones"; from *Passion*, "For Lil' Bit" and especially the two "Inaugural Rose" poems; from *Living Room*, "To Sing a Song of Palestine" and "Notes Toward Home." There are also texts that upon rereading seem to be occasional pieces whose occasion has passed: "On Moral Leadership as a Political Dilemma," "Some People," "What Would I Do White?" (wear furs and clip coupons; this reader optimistically thinks a white June Jordan would still be more June Jordan than Ivana Trump) and "Memo." In the newer work, "Poem Instead of a Columbus Day Parade," "The Torn Sky" and "Take Them Out!" pose the same problem. The events are current, but the poems don't transcend the level of chants, captions or slogans:

Swim beside the blown-up bridges
Fish inside the bomb-sick harbors
Farm across the contra ridges
Dance with revolutionary ardor
Swim/Fish/Farm/ Dance
Nicaragua Nicaragua
("Dance: Nicaragua")

Likewise, printing the word "chlorofluorocarbons" nine times down a page, with an odd simile in the middle, is less informative about the destruction of the ozone layer than was last week's exchange of letters in *The New York Times*, and less productive of thought and action on the issue.

There are, in short, too many propaganda poems, where the activist's desire to touch every base, to stand up and be counted on every current issue, took precedence over the poet/critic's choice of what ought to be published, not in a newspaper or a flyer but in a book that will be kept, read and reread. One need only compare Jordan's elegy for Martin Luther King Jr., which is entirely, though musically, public, with her poem for Fannie Lou Hamer—also a public figure, but this time a person Jordan knew well and worked beside. There's a life, a voice, no hagiography but a lively portrait in "1977: Poem for Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer":

Humble as a woman anywhere
I remember finding you inside the
laundromat
in Ruleville
lion spine relaxed/hell
what's the point to courage
when you washin clothes?
. . .
one solid gospel
(*sanctified*)
one gospel
(*peace*)
one full Black lily
luminescent
in a homemade field
of love.

This could have been a poem for an aunt/sister/mother (the feeling of blood tie is so strong) as well as a poem about any brave friend. The fact that its subject was also a public (now historical) figure gives it another dimension, and the poet a status she or he has rarely held in this country: someone who writes as an intimate of the makers of history, as an actor in significant events—and who also reminds us that the face of history can be changed to a familiar, to a family face.

One public issue with which Jordan has been closely associated in recent years and which has become a recurrent subject of her poetry is the conflict in the Middle East, including Lebanon, and the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination in the West Bank and elsewhere. It's an issue that has at times polarized some readers' responses to her work. I too have stopped myself to examine my own responses to texts like "Apologies to All the People in Lebanon," "Living Room" and "Intifada." What I find is that Jordan does in these poems what she satirizes and exposes in the Bernhard Goetz monologue: She creates an undifferentiated "they" with no stated antecedent, which embodies evil or at least the evil done to the Palestinians. A reader familiar with the events will know that Jordan's "they" sometimes refers to the Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia, sometimes to the Israeli Army, sometimes to the present Israeli government. Because these names do not appear, what the "they" represents becomes unspecified, a monolith. Once a name has been written it is more difficult to use it unilaterally: There is the Lebanese Army and the Israeli Army, and also the Israeli opposition and the Israeli peace movement. There is a poem in Jordan's previous collection, *Living Room*, that expresses confusion and dismay at the paradox of Lebanese-on-Lebanese violence. There is also one envisioning peace and cooperation, dedicated to an Israeli peace activist. These weren't included in the present collection. A poet, a worker with words, should use those words to clarify, not to obfuscate.

THE GOLD CANNON

Grown-ups didn't know more than me
About the dead. I'd ask, Do you really have to stay
There? and they would say, It's up to God.
Now that father was dead I wondered
About him a lot. He was there,
But also in heaven, as my grandmother said.
I wanted to ask, How can he be in two places?
But knew better. I would lower my eyes
And remember father's favorite shirt hung
On a shovel two days before he died.

I thought about heaven in a different way
From other kids. At the cemetery there was a cannon,
And every time we drove through the cement
Gate, I would get on my knees in the backseat
Of our Chevy and peek at the gold-painted cannon.
I thought the last thing a dead person did
Was stick his head in the barrel. An angel
Would help give the neck a little twist,
And then you were really dead. There was one cannon,
Like one God, and graves rolled on a hill,
Then over that hill, then up again.

Gary Soto

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The best American writing I've read about Vietnam has been by black and white vets who were there (Yusef Komunyakaa's *Dien Cai Dau* is a moving recent example), not by antiwar activists who weren't. I think the best poetry of the *intifada* will be written by Palestinians, and by Israelis—and that a writer who is neither, who hasn't been there except by analogy, runs the risk of letting exhortation and indignation replace observation and introspection. Adrienne Rich's recent poems about the Middle East are essentially the meditations of an American Jew who finds herself implicated in the conflict whether she chooses to be or not. Therein lie the tension and interest of the poems. The source of Jordan's involvement may be equally specific, but we don't know what it is. She gives us catalogues of the atrocities "they" performed; she seems to have no questions and to know all the answers. I think it is necessary to add that I write this as a Jew who is sickened by the Likud-led government's historically overdetermined version of apartheid, who is also opposed to and frightened by the conflation of that government with "Israelis" and "Jews" too easily made by right- and left-wing lobbyists and politicians.

Jordan's Palestinians and Nicaraguans are too often one-dimensional hero/victims. Jordan's African-Americans, small-town Middle Western whites and long-distance Brooklyn lovers of any race or sex are complex, even when glimpsed quickly in a hardware store or from a cab crossing a bridge at midnight. In spite of rage and outrage, even a rapist is not "they" but "thou":

> . . . considering the history
> that leads us to this dismal place
> where (your arm
> raised
> and my eyes
> lowered)
> there is nothing left but the drippings
> of power and
> a consummate wreck of tenderness/I
> want to know
> Is this what you call
> Only Natural?
> ("Rape Is Not a Poem")

The desire to reread and to pass a book on to others are two strong strands of a writer-reader connection. I don't know how many times I've read Jordan's work to myself and out loud to friends and students. At a writers' conference in Grenoble last November I read "Poem About My Rights" to illustrate that North American feminist poetry could not be segregated from a tradition of politically engaged writing, and also to show how a poet could create a voice that would be heard as intended, no matter who was reading the poem. What is it about June Jordan's work that I like as much as I do? Its capacity to unsettle and disturb me, for one thing, to make me want to pursue the discussion, write something in response. In "War and Memory" she recounts that, as a child, she related the suffering of Jewish concentration camp prisoners—described factually by her father and symbolically, in terms of women's pain, by her mother—to the war and internal bleeding in her home. The two-way trajectory between reporting and metaphor, between personal and global politics, is floodlit in Jordan's writing. Engaged as she is with the issues of the day and the irreducible issues of human life, her work provokes engagement with the reader, something too few readers now expect of poetry, something June Jordan gives back to poetry generously. □

The Serpent's Tooth

GENE SANTORO

MILES: The Autobiography. *By Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe. Simon and Schuster. 431 pp. $22.95.*

Miles Davis is one of the only jazz musicians who could get away with putting just his first name and picture on the front of a book and still sell more than a few copies. After all, for the forty-plus years of his professional career Miles has been standing at or near the center of one musical earthquake after another.

If he came to New York on the pretext of studying at the Juilliard School of Music, he soon found his real mentors, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, and so from the age of 18 he worked with these bebop revolutionaries. By 1949 he'd decided to pursue a new musical direction with arranger Gil Evans and players like John Lewis and Gerry Mulligan; thus was born *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol). After kicking his drug habit in 1953 he gradually pulled together the landmark group that included John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley and Bill Evans. This group worked modally, rather than simply cycling through chord changes as had been done since the beginning of jazz. A few years later his crackerjack outfit, with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams, pushed that notion beyond its limits, and coincidentally launched what became known as fusion. In love with Jimi Hendrix's guitar and Sly and the Family Stone's straight-up funk, Miles went out *On the Corner*, which not only helped change the way jazz was recorded but earned the undying enmity of jazz critics, including Wynton Marsalis, who has loftily dismissed Miles's work after the 1950s, even though he obviously owes Miles an enormous musical debt. And so on.

Most jazz critics have been badmouthing Miles for decades, which is one of the major themes of his autobiography. If Miles is famous for anything outside his music, it's his continual putdown of the white-run jazz industry, from producers to critics, and his street-style mouth—and that language itself becomes another of the book's subjects.

Actually, *Miles: The Autobiography* reads as if Miles talked it into a tape machine, except for the set-piece opening chapter, a hackneyed prophetic epiphany involving a very young Miles and the blue flame of a gas jet. For the rest, Miles talks his way through his life, his music, his grudges, his fistfights, his persecutions, his addictions, his triumphs. That makes the book by turns fascinating and irritating, controversial and self-contradictory, lyrical and boring, pungent and self-aggrandizing—in other words, a lot like the man himself.

What most people want in star autobiographies are spicy revelations and settlement of old scores, and here Miles doesn't disappoint, even if some of the content does. Apparently, the hot-tempered Miles is as fast with his hands as he is with his mouth, and he doesn't seem to care which person or what gender he hits. Without trying to justify or excuse how disgustingly often he hits "upside the head" the women who pass through his life, I should point out that Miles—who has abused virtually every drug known—became a pimp during his period of heroin addiction in the early 1950s. A lot of his lingo and habits come from those dark days rather than from his relatively sunny, upper-middle-class upbringing in East St. Louis. Then too, he makes it plain how much he respected his father, who appears to have supported

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him emotionally and financially with virtually no strings attached, and how little he liked his mother, who fought with her husband continually and eventually divorced him. So there's plenty of fodder for would-be psychologists in Miles's antipathy toward women, the myriad casual affairs during his marriages, the recurrent brutality directed at wives and girlfriends (and for that matter band members and friends) and his shrug-of-the-shoulders attitude about this subject.

Other musicians, even Miles's idols, also get brutalized, or are paid back for old grudges. For example, Charlie Parker, described as a brilliant musician and raconteur, is also depicted as a manipulative creep willing to shovel any mountain of shit, shortchange any friend or band mate, to feed his habits; the famously caustic Miles is remarkably unsentimental about either Bird's genius or his—and bebop's—excesses, musical or drug-related. Wynton Marsalis, too, gets some well-deserved lumps for his self-aggrandizing posturing.

Although the book definitely emphasizes personalities and events, the reader gets some sense of the dizzyingly varied musical styles Miles has pioneered or helped launch during his long career. That part of the trumpeter's life gets less attention than I'd expected, and it comes primarily in the form of anecdotal peeks behind the scenes—some fascinating, some rehashed from what look like other sources. And when strictly technical points are raised, they're often not properly explained.

But that's consistent with the way Miles's personality is presented here: cynical, largely unreflective, oddly vulnerable and shy, quick to anger and slow to forget. Away from the bandstand and recording studio, where he's plumbed the depths for sounds and ideas, he seems to keep himself deliberately visceral and shallow—as if too much reflection would dull his intuitive edge. That means, for instance, that his discussions of racism in the music business often become rhetorical or egocentric, rants rather than indictments. This is disappointing because Miles is one of the few jazzers who has had a large enough audience to make big bucks; his complaints of racist treatment could hardly be written off as economic sour grapes. Presented in a more informed and organized way, his attacks on racism in the music business and in society in general could have been deadly enough to extend the legacy of his father, a man active in African-American movements, and teach the rest of us a few things from the inside.

But that's like wishing Miles were Montaigne. For those who want more meat, there's always Jack Chambers's solid *Milestones*; for the rest, the music will have to continue to speak for itself, as it has done so eloquently for so long. □

Executioner's Throng

WILLIAM S. McFEELY

RITES OF EXECUTION: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776–1865. *By Louis P. Masur. Oxford University Press. 208 pp. $29.95.*

If the past can speak to the present, no recent book about nineteenth-century America speaks more clearly than *Rites of Execution*. In one of the most regressive trends in the nation, the death penalty has returned to many states. Despite the eloquence of Governor Mario Cuomo and the admirable stubbornness of Governor Michael Dukakis, the steadfast dissent of Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and William Brennan, the determined works of citizens' groups opposed to capital punishment and, most commendable of all, the unheralded struggle by lawyers to thwart the killing of each condemned person, the cry for blood grows shriller.

Louis Masur's handsomely written account describes how, in the 1830s, public hangings were abandoned in favor of executions in the seclusion of prison yards. Masur sees attitudes toward state killing from the Revolution to the Civil War as reflecting the nation's social thinking.

Masur knows how to tell a story, and he realizes that murder stories are almost irresistible. He begins with the case of Washington Goode, a black man sentenced to be hanged for murder in Massachusetts in 1848. Goode was convicted on circumstantial evidence. His predicament provoked the sympathy of people disgusted with the urge to rid society of lower-class misconduct (drinking and sex were involved) by using the drastic measure of the death penalty. If a "white man who had money" had committed the same crime, said the *Boston Herald* at the time, he would not have been sentenced to death. The leader of the attempt to save Goode's life was Wendell Phillips, a foe of slavery and a friend of reform on all fronts.

The hanging took place on the prison grounds, but the police had to beat back men trying to scale the walls. The gallows were visible from surrounding buildings, and people scrambled for a look. A butcher "claimed to have refused as much as twenty dollars for access to his windows. He expressed concern that his customers would no longer buy from him, but resolved he did not care, for 'this is downright murder.' " During the night before the scheduled execution Goode tried to kill himself; he was revived and hanged in the morning.

Masur considers the Goode case to be transitional. After it there was an increasing effort by middle-class reformers to move executions beyond the rude gaze of public scrutiny. If in 1790 the Rev. James Dana preached that the sight of a hanging would teach the onlookers discipline, by the 1830s a preacher was more likely to fear that such occasions would stimulate disorder among a restless people.

A shift in thinking about criminality was also under way. The preamble to a 1786 Pennsylvania law ending capital punishment for certain crimes stated that "it is the wish of every good government to reclaim rather than destroy." Many who shared this thinking came to see the penitentiary as a place for moral reclamation, often by means of solitary confinement. By 1843, however, Masur sees a "shift from an emphasis on reforming criminals to a preoccupation with the deterrent effect of punishment." The leaders of the drive against capital punishment were reformers like Lydia Maria Child, the Quakers and Hosea Ballou's working-class Universalists. They were drawing on their own reform thinking as well as that of Benjamin Rush, who had led a failed eighteenth-century attempt to end the death penalty. According to Masur, the nineteenth-century crusade was close to succeeding until it was made, in a sense, irrelevant by that larger rite of execution, the Civil War.

Rites of Execution is the work of a historian ingenious with sources, rich in imagination and mature in judgment.

William S. McFeely, who teaches history at the University of Georgia, wishes to thank attorney Les W. Ramirez for his assistance.

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However, it has some lapses. Nearly all of Masur's references are to the Middle Atlantic States and New England, but it would be good to know how the more violent South and frontier West felt about capital punishment. Although Masur has read widely and well, he has stinted on Freud: Watching the ejaculation of life from a vertical body grasped inexorably just below the head was sexually stimulating to crowds, as their ribald remarks revealed. But in proper nineteenth-century America such public orgies had to be suppressed. The book also would have benefited from references to the studies of crowd control by historians of Europe, like Susanna Barrows, who maintain that intellectuals were frightened by the power of "mobs."

The brief, powerfully understated epilogue refers to *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976), when the Supreme Court declared that "the punishment of death does not invariably violate the Constitution" and added that a "large proportion" of American society continued to regard the death penalty "as an appropriate and necessary criminal sanction." With this single comment on the effective counterattack on the twentieth-century attempt to end capital punishment, Masur awakens us to the fact that reforms, like revolutions, often run backward. □

THEATER

THOMAS M. DISCH

City of Angels
The Tenth Man
Oh, Hell
Artist Descending a Staircase
The Circle

Michael Meyer, the translator of Ibsen and Strindberg, maintains in his memoir *Words Through a Window pane* that dramatists have an effective creative life of no more than fifteen years. Even those prolific for a longer span of time produce all their enduring work within a fifteen-year period, according to Meyer, who cites the careers of Coward, Priestley, Williams, Osborne and Pirandello as examples. One can easily think of enough others to make it seem a fair rule of thumb. But on the evidence of *City of Angels* it doesn't apply to musical theater, since two of the show's three creators go back to almost the dawn of time. Larry Gelbart, who wrote the book, also co-wrote *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in 1962 (and wrote for *Caesar's Hour* before that), and composer Cy Coleman has produced a steady succession of hit musicals since *Wildcat* in 1960. Only the lyricist, David Zippel, is new to Broadway, though certainly not to the craft of song-making. Perhaps what accounts for the creative longevity of those who make musicals is the necessity of collaboration—a process, like exogamy, that mixes old and new to their mutual benefit.

City of Angels is in the same league as *Guys and Dolls*, *Damn Yankees* and *Gypsy*, a musical comedy that is delightful from every direction you might look at it. The songs not only meld into the action in a seamless flow, but a few of them are so good that I'm confident they'll be playing in shopping malls and elevators into the next century. "You're Nothing Without Me," the duet sung by the show's two over-the-title stars, James Naughton and Gregg Edelman, is the best of the lot, a song to make both heart and voice soar. It comes at the conceptual high point of Act I, as Naughton, playing Stone, a hard-boiled detective, encounters Stine, the writer who has brought him into existence in his book *City of Angels*. Stine's fame is a function of Stone's Bogart-like style, but Stone is also "nothing" without Stine. All of David Zippel's lyrics ornament this Pirandelloish situation gracefully, but powered by Coleman's melody, they also register, out of the immediate context, as a simple, heart-stopping affirmation of friendship with anyone, anywhere, anytime.

To tease out a universal meaning from a singular, piquant situation and do so with continual narrative and melodic ingenuity and wit—what more can one ask of any musical comedy? Well, dancing perhaps. Dancing that is not simply an interpolation and a prettiness requires a shift of aesthetic gears that almost always slows the narrative flow, and Gelbart, with a double plot to tell (one of those a mystery), can't slow down for a waltz. *City of Angels* has the narrative density of a Sondheim musical, but lacks the ostensible high seriousness. Gelbart is serious enough, but in the manner of a vintage Hitchcock thriller, putting a gloss of irony on such stock characters as bimbo, gal Friday, tough D.A. and rich bitch (roles acted and sung with all due bravura by, respectively, Rachel York, Randy Graff, Shawn Elliott and Dee Hoty). The framing narrative of the writer Stine contending against the forces of

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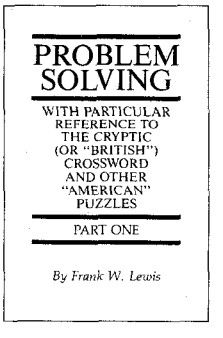
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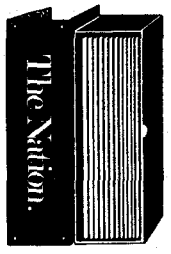

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commercialism, represented by the weaselly producer Buddy Fidler (Rene Auberjonois, who is very funny), is rendered in a complementary, Hollywood-according-to-Hollywood style.

The cast of twenty-five is marshaled through a kaleidoscopic shifting of scenes (twenty-one scenes in Act I, sixteen in Act II) by director Michael Blakemore, aided by Walter Painter (whose credit is "Musical Numbers Staged by" rather than "Choreographer"), a work of coordination that must be as daunting as that of the chief air traffic controller at J.F.K. and one that is similarly apt to go unnoticed in proportion to its success. To do full justice to the show would require paying a tribute to everyone on a lengthy list of credits. And, not to forget, to the critic Frank Rich: He liked it, and so potent was his rave in *The New York Times* that the next day the box office at the Virginia Theater raked in half a million dollars in ticket sales, thereby averting a threatened closing. There is a God.

Whether that God's name is Rich, and whether he is a just God, has been an issue debated in recent issues of publications other than *The Times*, in connection with an open letter written by the wounded playwright David Hare protesting Rich's treatment of *The Secret Rapture* (treatment I thought overgenerous, since Rich more or less accepted Hare's claims to pre-eminence as a playwright and objected only to his work as director of his own play). When Rich wrote an Olympian rebuff, arguing that it was the producers, not Rich's review, who'd closed Hare's play, Hare withdrew his letter. Even in paraphrase (in the November 29, 1989, issue of *7 Days*) Hare came across as a twit, and Rich scored, tortoiselike, an easy victory.

The fact remains that Rich exercises a Caesar-like power through *The Times*. That paper's critical clout easily exceeds that of the city's other dailies combined. It is a rare musical that can survive a thumbs down from Rich, and without his approval a serious drama is quite likely to fold, unless (like *The Circle*) it is buoyed up by stars of the largest magnitude. Rich isn't to be blamed for the failure of New York City to support more than one newspaper that commands the attention of those affluent enough to attend the theater. I think he probably is the best critic in town, at least with respect to readability. But he does have his blind spots, and because he also has such power, Rich's critical lacunae have the power to shape Broadway theater. What producer would be so foolish as to mount revivals of Somerset Maugham or Paddy Chayefsky after Rich had pronounced against their claims on posterity's continued attention? Rich virtually posed that challenge himself in his review (December 11, 1989) of Chayefsky's *The Tenth Man*: "Why did Lincoln Center Theater choose so obviously dated a work for exhumation?" Rich's answer: that it was hoping to cash in on the success of last season's *Café Crown*. "In its eagerness to pander [to Jewish theater parties]," he continued, "*The Tenth Man* seems as cynical now as the television programming that Chayefsky would later attack in his screenplay for *Network*."

I loved *The Tenth Man* when I saw the original production on Broadway in 1959, and I still love it, which, if Rich is right, makes me a hick so easily duped I can accept Phoebe Cates's and Peter Friedman's performances in the leading roles as the genuine romantic article, though Rich dismisses them as "cooing boulevard-comedy juveniles." Rich finds the jokes unfunny; I laughed a lot, and didn't feel myself alone. He accuses director Ulu Grosbard of "managing to make the most casual bits of stage business look overrehearsed and fake"; for my own part, I was a believer.

I would submit that belief—that is, the willing suspension of it—is Frank Rich's blind spot. It is, to be sure, a selective blindness. Rich has no empathetic problems with musical comedy. His imagination seems to thrive on the degree of stylization musical theater requires; 95 percent of the time I agree with his judgment calls on musicals. But with ordinary drama of the "well-made" variety Rich seems to be as resistant to vicarious involvement as a Valley Girl watching Lillian Gish in *Broken Blossoms*. Part of the critic's job is to cultivate such a resistance, to notice how the sets and lighting contribute to or detract from the overall effect, to rate the relative merits of actors, etc. But the level of resistance Rich often demonstrates suggests him capable of giving *Gone With the Wind* a bad review on the ground that it panders to a low taste. Admittedly, this is a cut above the pan John Simon might have given, objecting to the conformation of Vivien Leigh's earlobes; but it is, in just as essential a way, off the mark.

My own grade for *The Tenth Man* would be B+ for the play, a tad less for the production. The Beaumont Theater's thrust stage creates some intractable

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problems, and I suspect the sightlines for anyone in the right-hand quarter of the audience would be a constant aggravation. What Rich dismisses as the play's "trick ending" I remember as a true *coup de théâtre* in the original production, though it did seem less so this time round. (The poster for the show, by James McMullan, conveys the glory of that moment more vividly.) But I could be wrong: It is in the nature of a surprise that it only surprises once. A surprise foreseen can still be beautiful, and I give *The Tenth Man* lots of points for beauty, particularly to Phoebe Cates in the role of the schizophrenic heroine believed by her grandfather to be possessed by a dybbuk. The play succeeds or fails to the extent it makes us love her even in her moments of certifiable madness, and it succeeded. As the representative denizens of a Mineola synagogue, Joseph Wiseman, Bob Dishy, Jack Weston and Ron Rifkin came across as the salt of the earth—and its pepper, garlic and dill.

Meanwhile, downstairs at Lincoln Center, at the Mitzi Newhouse, the theater's head, Gregory Mosher, has directed an odd double bill under the joint title of *Oh, Hell*. Shel Silverstein's doggerel ballad "The Devil and Billy Markham" acts as an hourlong curtain raiser. As a balladeer, Silverstein is on a par with Robert Service: If you could imagine a version of "The Cremation of Sam Magee" that availed itself of all the ribald liberties available to *Hustler*, and was recited by a spaced-out biker who *never stopped*, you'd have a fair idea. Rich, among many others, found it purgatorial. I came round to enjoying it, thanks in large part to the shamelessly hammy delivery of Dennis Locorriere. However, I think it would find a more natural venue if delivered serially between the bouts of a pro wrestling match than at Lincoln Center.

David Mamet's *Bobby Gould in Hell* was minor Mamet, but that's enough. Because he is acknowledged to be an important playwright, critics tend to fuss about what they think Mamet may be saying. Often enough (as in the gassy, theological stretches of *Bobby Gould*), he's not saying anything—his art is all in how he says it. No one can crack wise like David Mamet, and there is music like Mozart's in hearing W.H. Macy, as the most streetwise of demons, running verbal circles around Treat Williams. In any play featuring a devil, he is likely to get most of the good lines, so Macy's relative pre-eminence is not to be wondered at. But Williams is overshadowed even by Steven Goldstein as a minor, dimwitted demon. In the role of Glenna, a modern Donna Elvira and Donna Anna rolled into one, Felicity Huffman is a monster of postmodern priggishness and as droll a grotesque as any drawn by Sendak. Mamet's critics are wont to scold him for misogyny, but how else should a satirist depict that half of humanity who are women, if not satirically? Would we want a kinder, gentler Mamet? God forbid.

Although drawing rooms these days have mostly gone the way of the coach-and-four, New York has been enjoying a small renaissance of that much-disparaged but strangely rugged theatrical genre, the drawing-room comedy. Last year there was *The Cocktail Hour* by the American A.R. Gurney, and every year, dependable as Christmas, Britain's Alan Ayckbourn produces another mechanical marvel. But one of the true masters of the form is not generally credited as such: Tom Stoppard, who is more celebrated for making highbrow subjects like quantum physics yield comic high jinks.

One of Stoppard's best plays and a model drawing-room comedy, *Artist Descending a Staircase* has just received its Broadway premiere some seventeen years after he wrote it. On the face of it, *Artist* is an odd sort of drawing-room comedy. A major scene takes place on a battlefield at the beginning of World War I and the rest in seedy artists' lofts in Lambeth and Chelsea. But in one way it is the purest example of its genre, since it premiered in 1972 not in a theater but on BBC radio, and its first audience would have enjoyed it in their own drawing rooms.

What Stoppard's play shares with other classics of the genre is its mathematical form. A drawing-room comedy is nothing if not *neat*. Every entrance and exit is calculated for effect. Every flash of wit, every piece of business, has its purpose in advancing a plot that is a work of geometry. *Artist* begins in 1972, just after the ambiguous death of the aged artist of the title, who seems to have been pushed down the staircase in question by one or the other of his two lifelong companions. The next scenes regress in time all the way back to 1914, then boomerang back to the beginning. With each shift in time the story becomes emotionally denser. In the first scenes the three artful codgers refight the old battles of modernism, and Stoppard pulls out all his epigrammatic stops. Then a love story is excavated: In their salad days

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the artists all loved the same woman, who was blind.

One major cleverness of the radio play was the way Stoppard so long concealed the fact of his heroine's blindness. Indeed, Stoppard's express purpose was to write a play that could *only* be done on radio, and director Tim Luscombe hasn't done much to finesse the author's intention. The sets by Tony Straiges don't capture the miasma of failed avant-gardists sharing an old age of penury, nor is there any period feel for the early 1920s. And Luscombe simply walks around the major hurdle in staging the play by letting a black curtain represent the 1914 battlefield. If it were not for Paxton Whitehead's masterful mugging as the curmudgeonly Martello, I would suggest that the best way to see *Artist Descending a Staircase* would be with one's eyes closed.

By a happy coincidence, just as *Artist* comes to Broadway a classic drawing-room comedy from 1921 has also returned to the New York stage. The title of Maugham's *The Circle* expresses the moral geometrizing of drawing-room comedy in a nutshell. Once again Frank Rich was not amused, but the constellated star power of Rex Harrison, Glynis Johns and Stewart Granger has kept the show running anyway. Rich was not the only critic to find that Maugham's wit had gone flat, but the particular lines he objected to as demonstrating Maugham's banality struck me as reasonably droll. As when the juvenile lead, Harley Venton, first reveals his passionate, adulterous love by bursting out to his hostess, after much decorous small talk: "Do you know that I'm awfully in love with you?" The very inadequacy of the declaration is what makes it both amusing and endearing. It's not Maugham writing in a banal way but Maugham telling us that people who aren't terribly clever may even so be quite lovable. Of course, he leaves it to his actors to persuade us they are lovable, and the cast at the Ambassador does so abundantly—Johns most conspicuously, as becomes a star of grande dame status, but Roma Downey was also adorable and all that. *The Circle* is, as much as any Dufy, a period piece—and like Dufy's diffident, breezy pochades, a large part of its art lies in seeming utterly lightweight. Lightness may not be the only virtue to which comic art can aspire, but it can suffice. If *Artist Descending a Staircase* is fruitcake, *The Circle* is a cream puff. They are both delicious. ☐

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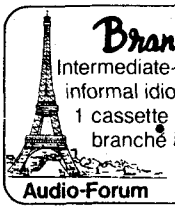

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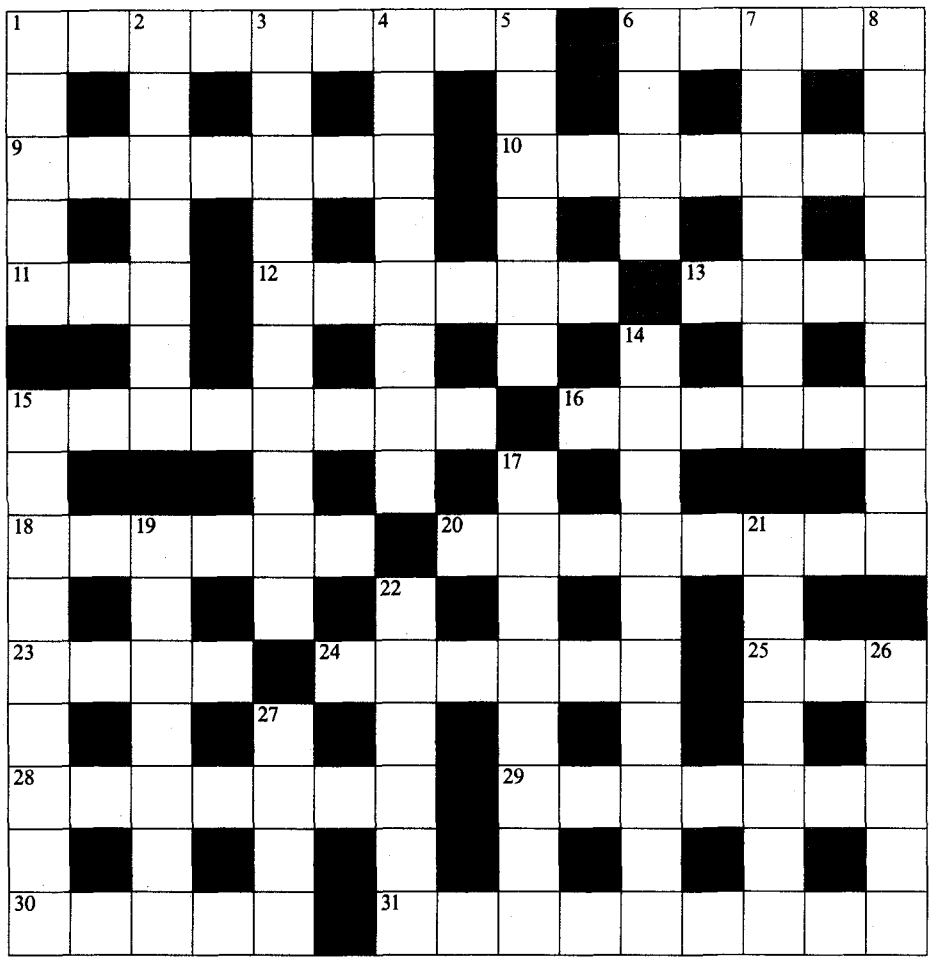

ACROSS

1 In the city, one finds a foreign priest with a toy instrument playing around! (9)
6 Father holds half a dozen for the reputed giant-killer. (5)
9 Is it a strain for such a skilled workman? (7)
10 People such as a famous word man might also be bird men, in a sense. (7)
11 See 27 down
12 There shouldn't be a hit in one, though nails used to do so. (6)
13 See 25
15 Friend with a sort of tail that is very big and grand? (8)
16 Chisels? (Acts in an exact way—inordinately so!) (6)
18 and 21 down With a two-car garage, you might be doing what the computer may have replaced. (6,7)
20 One who uses things to study the old country? (8)
23 If things are given this way, I get a book! (4)
24 and 5 down Hurry with a purpose, not playing hockey, and try to get elected! (3,3,6)
25 and 13 Turnover that might be 6 and 7/8? (7)
28 One might make a bachelor of sorts when the old king gets much more than his foot in! (7)
29 What they called the North around Connecticut might serve to smooth things over. (7)
30 A sore one is obviously not a good one in different roles. (5)
31 They don't lead up to the second floor on either front or back, as one avoids trouble. (9)

DOWN

1 Did he have an unusual stake in making certain lines popular? (5)
2 All rite in a wordy way? (7)
3 It might hold things for the players, though possibly nudist camps have no sign of quiet. (5,5)
4 Discovered by Brazza in a region of Tanzania. (8)
5 See 24 across
6 Very early drops what sounds like fees for membership. (4)
7 Wearing, if you are a sailor. (7)
8 One that gives things out, possibly like a princess and a poet. (9)
14 What a boa does with a tunic on, strict scholars show. (10)
15 It might be useful to come up with a lot of rupees on it and fish. (9)
17 How to confuse a common criminal confined, and caught. (8)
19 Natural indentations make a number sort of simple. (7)
21 See 18 across
22 Those who take the London underground, or might they be just vegetables? (6)
26 What a hot dog does might have a coat with it. (5)
27 and 11 across Letter-opener. (4,3)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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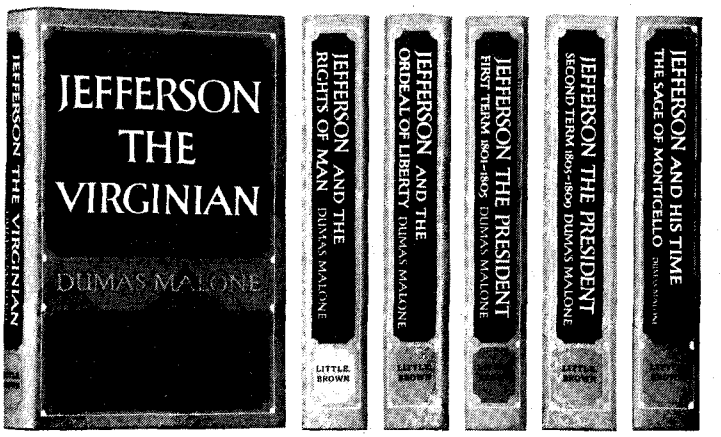
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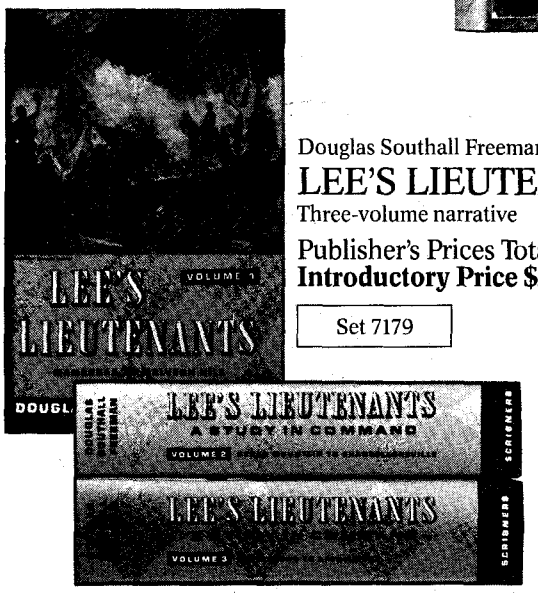

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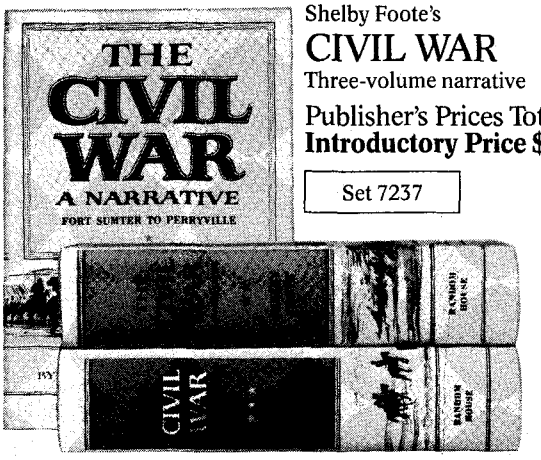

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